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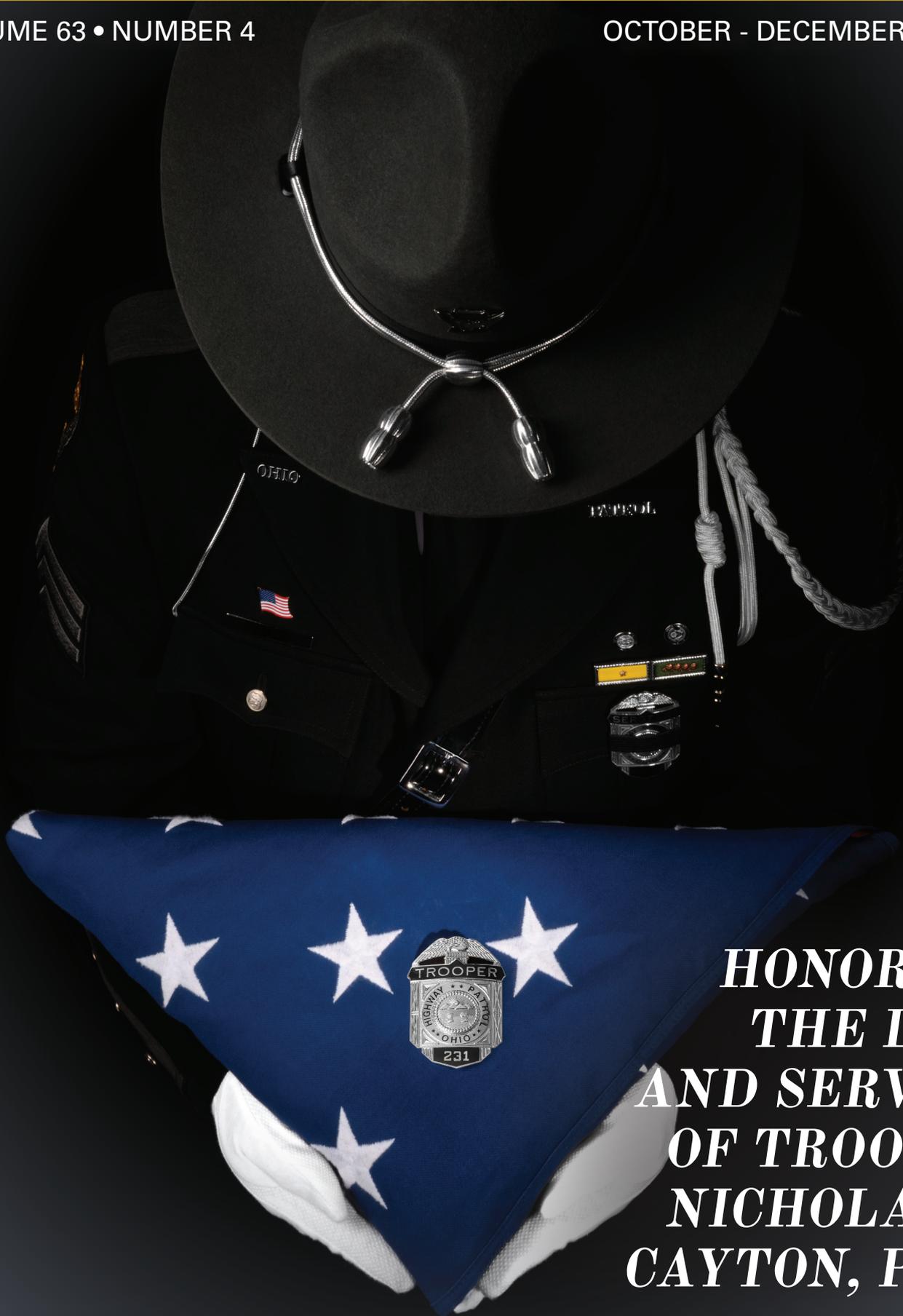
# FLYING WHEEL

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VOLUME 63 • NUMBER 4

OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 2025



**HONORING  
THE LIFE  
AND SERVICE  
OF TROOPER  
NICHOLAS P.  
CAYTON, PG. 4**

OHIO STATE  
HIGHWAY PATROL

## COLONEL'S LETTER



Some issues of the *Flying Wheel* are defined by celebration. Others highlight progress. This edition is defined by sacrifice, on service and the bonds that hold the Division together.

The Ohio State Highway Patrol experienced the loss of two of our own. We remember Trooper Nicholas P. Cayton, whose life and service reflected a deep commitment to something greater than himself. The ceremony honoring Trooper Cayton was a powerful reflection of who he was, a devoted husband and father, a soldier and a trooper whose impact will endure well beyond his years of service. We also mourn the passing of Sergeant Matthew R. Cook, a steady professional who served the people of Ohio with compassion, humility and quiet strength. As a Division, we stand with their families, support one another through this loss and carry forward their legacies in how we serve each other and the public.

That same sense of unity and compassion is reflected in Operation Santa's Sleigh. What began as a simple idea has grown into a statewide effort that reaches children, veterans and families during moments when connection matters most. The sight of first responders arriving with lights flashing is more than a holiday tradition, it is a reminder that service does not pause for the season, and that small acts of kindness can bring light to difficult days.

You will also read about the Ohio State Highway Patrol Retirees' Association as it marked its 50th anniversary. Their continued involvement serves as a reminder that the Patrol is not something you leave behind. The relationships built, the lessons learned and the pride in service remain long after the uniform is retired.

This issue also shines a light on the vital work carried out each day behind the scenes. From the skilled craftsmanship of the Tailor Shop to the critical analysis conducted by our Intelligence Unit, these sections remind us that our mission is sustained by the dedication and expertise of people in every role.

Together, these stories reflect the full measure of the Division, with service marked by sacrifice, compassion guided by purpose and a family that stands together in every season.

God bless our fallen, God bless the families and God bless the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

Colonel Charles A. Jones  
Superintendent

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Special thanks to the field and section units across the state who submitted photos and/or content.



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# HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF TROOPER NICHOLAS P. CAYTON



On Thursday, October 22, the Ohio State Highway Patrol family joined law enforcement officers from across the nation at Youngstown State University's Beeghly Center to honor the life, service and sacrifice of Trooper Nicholas P. Cayton, Unit 231, of the Canfield Post.

The ceremony, filled with personal reflections, paid tribute to a trooper whose life embodied the love of his country and his state.

Trooper Cayton, 40, was actively working inside his marked Patrol cruiser when he was fatally struck from behind by a commercial vehicle on October 16 in the northbound lanes of state Route 11, south of U.S. 224, in Mahoning County. He is survived by his wife, Lynsey, and their two children.

A 12-year veteran of the Patrol and a graduate of the 152nd Academy Class, Trooper Cayton served at the Lisbon and Canfield posts. He was named Post Trooper of the Year in 2022 and earned the Master Trooper designation in 2024.

Before joining the Patrol, he served with distinction in the Ohio Army National Guard, completing deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. His dual service shaped his character and guided his approach to public service. As Colonel Charles A. Jones reflected, "Trooper Cayton was a man of purpose, of strength and of unwavering devotion to something greater than himself."

Inside the Beeghly Center, his military uniform, bagpiper uniform and Patrol uniform were displayed side by side. Together, they represented the many ways he dedicated his life to serving others. Colonel Jones described them as "the story of a servant's heart," a visible reminder that Trooper Cayton lived intentionally in service to others.

As a tribute to his service, four flags were presented to his family. Each flag was flown for two minutes and thirty-one seconds at the Canfield Post, a symbolic honor acknowledging Unit 231. Colonel Jones announced that his unit number will

be retired, ensuring that his service and sacrifice will remain a lasting part of the Patrol's history.

Throughout the ceremony, colleagues and friends reflected on the qualities that defined Trooper Cayton, noting how those who served with him described him as reliable, disciplined and compassionate, someone who could bring lightness even in tough moments. They also remembered his humor and the way he lifted up others.

Governor Mike DeWine offered remarks informed by the stories and memories shared with him. He noted, "It has become clear to me that Nicholas Cayton was truly one of a kind. He was special. He was unique. And he was deeply loved." He also shared the lasting image of a rainbow that appeared above the Canfield Post as troopers escorted Trooper Cayton home, a symbol, he said, of light emerging after profound loss.

The ceremony also underscored the strength and unity of the Patrol family. Colonel Jones recognized the Canfield Post for the compassion, professionalism and unwavering support they demonstrated. Their response, he said, reflected the meaning of family, one of the Patrol's Core Values, and the way the Patrol family stands together in times of hardship.

Trooper Cayton's life was one of unwavering commitment to his nation, to his state and to those he loved. His legacy endures through the people he influenced, the colleagues he supported and the Patrol family that will carry his memory forward.



*A large group of Trooper Cayton's fellow bagpipers followed the funeral procession to honor their fallen comrade.*



*The service and procession ended with a 21-gun salute and the playing of taps.*

## HONORING SERGEANT MATTHEW R. COOK, JR.



Sergeant Matthew R. Cook Jr., Defiance Post, passed away while off duty on December 31, 2025. A funeral service was held at Gateway Church in Findlay on January 9, 2026.

Sergeant Cook began his Patrol career in September 2011 as a cadet dispatcher assigned to the Bowling Green Dispatch Center. He became a member of the 155th Academy Class in September 2013 and graduated on February 14, 2014. He was assigned to the Findlay Post for the majority of his 14-year career. He earned the Criminal Patrol Award eight times. He was selected as Post Trooper of the Year twice. He was promoted to sergeant in 2024 to serve as assistant post commander of the Defiance Post. He is survived by his grandmother, partner, son, parents, siblings, cousins, and his nieces and nephew.

## A CARAVAN OF CARE: OPERATION SANTA'S SLEIGH

On December 23, the seventh annual Operation Santa's Sleigh (OSS) event united law enforcement officers, firefighters and first responders from across Ohio in a powerful show of holiday spirit. Together, they visited children's hospitals, veterans' homes and medical centers to deliver cheer and comfort to those who needed it most.

The celebration touched lives in Akron, Chillicothe, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Georgetown, Sandusky and Toledo, bringing joy to children, veterans and their families during the season of giving.

At every stop, the glow of flashing lights and the sound of sirens carried a message of hope and solidarity. Patients, medical professionals and families were reminded that they are never forgotten during the holidays.

In Columbus, the heart of Operation Santa's Sleigh, hundreds of law enforcement and public safety vehicles joined a festive caravan from Bishop Hartley High School to Nationwide Children's Hospital. With lights illuminated, first responders greeted children spending their holidays away from home, turning a difficult season into one filled with wonder.

As is tradition, Operation Santa's Sleigh junior leadership were sworn in at the Columbus event. This year's Junior Ohio State Highway Patrol Colonel was 7-year-old Maveryc Breece, the son of Upper Sandusky Police Lieutenant Jordan Breece and Ohio National Guard Master Sergeant Vanessa Breece, and younger brother to Ava. When he was just three and a half years old, Maveryc was diagnosed with high-risk acute lymphoblastic leukemia. His participation at the event was to wave to the patients, as well as the team of medical professionals who helped him regain his "big strong muscles."

First responders and agencies also generously donated toys, food, household essentials, personal care items and gift cards to Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Ohio. Their efforts ensured that families facing difficult circumstances received meaningful support and a brighter holiday season.

Another highlight in Columbus was the "DeckYour Sleigh" vehicle decoration contest, where participating agencies transformed their vehicles with festive themes that reflected both creativity and holiday spirit.

The event has become a cherished tradition in Ohio, involving Light Ohio Blue, the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police, Buckeye State Sheriffs' Association, Ohio State Highway Patrol, International Association of Firefighters, and other law enforcement and public safety agencies.



*Sergeant Ryan E. Purpura with wife, Melissa, and daughter, Amelia, at OSS in Toledo.*



*Colonel Charles A. Jones with Junior Colonel Maveryc Breece and his family.*



*Trooper Malachi J. Shelton and Trooper Ethan G. White at OSS in Dayton.*



*Hudson Police Officer Robert Simone and Trooper Shannon E. Mohney at OSS in Akron.*



*OSS in Cleveland.*



*Trooper Christopher Krantz and Verldon "Pop" Campbell, a 95-year-old U.S. Army and Korean War Veteran, at OSS in Cincinnati.*

## PATROL USES INNOVATIVE TESTING, RECOVERY PROGRAMS AND LAB ADVANCEMENTS TO COMBAT IMPAIRED DRIVING

Impaired driving remains one of the most significant threats to public safety on Ohio's roadways. Recognizing that traditional enforcement alone is not enough, the Ohio State Highway Patrol has developed an approach to reducing impaired driving that blends prevention, enforcement and recovery.

The Patrol's approach is unique because it combines oral fluid testing advancements, the Operation New Beginnings recovery program and Green Lab/Advanced Criminal Interdiction Training into a single focused effort.

The foundation of this strategy is the emphasis on recovery and prevention. Through Operation New Beginnings, the Division is directly confronting recidivism by partnering with mental health and addiction services. This program stands out for its multi-focus approach of aiming to reduce repeat offenses while raising awareness of vital treatment options and offering individuals a path to recovery.

The push towards precision enforcement is powered by new technology, including the advancement of oral fluid testing. Evidentiary oral fluid testing, which tests saliva through a sample to identify if someone is impaired by drugs, offers some benefits over traditional blood/urine testing, such as no need for a collector of the same gender, it's noninvasive, it's less infectious than blood, it's more difficult to adulterate and it's easier for those with poor venous access. When the testing of the sample is done at the Crime Laboratory, toxicologists are looking for parent drugs, which show recent drug use when found. By performing better testing, courts have information that will assist in prosecuting impaired drivers.

Green Lab/Advanced Criminal Interdiction Training is unique nationwide in its hands-on, science-based approach. This training offers troopers the ability to interact directly with cannabis-impaired volunteers under expert supervision. This immersive experience gives troopers practical insight into recognizing subtle impairment indicators that classroom instruction alone cannot provide.

By combining enforcement with immediate recovery opportunities, this innovative approach meets both the public's need for safer roads and the individual's need for a second chance.

## PATROL INTRODUCES STRATEGIC SERVICE PLAN FOR 2026

In November, the Ohio State Highway Patrol announced ACT 2026, a proactive and service-based initiative designed to bring the Division's strategic plan to the forefront of daily operations throughout the coming year.

ACT, which stands for Advancing, Collaboration and Traffic Safety, sets clear and data-driven goals to directly address the leading causes of crashes across the state. Those include reducing distracted driving in serious injury and fatal crashes by 10%, reducing impaired driving in fatal crashes by 10%, increasing Ohio's safety belt compliance to 90%, reducing Ohio's OVI recidivism rate to 33% and reducing the number of 20-plus-mph speed violations to less than 2%.

To achieve these goals, ACT 2026 implements four main strategies. First, using high-impact and data-driven enforcement to quickly locate and respond to dangerous driving behaviors. Second, focusing on education by teaching young drivers about good driving habits through programs like DRIVE to Live. Third, utilizing partnerships with mental health and addiction services through Operation New Beginnings to lower the rate of recidivism. Fourth, implementing strategic readiness projects to encourage additional training for troopers.

ACT 2026 is more than just a strategic plan; it is a commitment to a safer Ohio. Through accountability, collaboration and training, the Patrol is working to reduce the risk of every mile traveled on our roadways.

The logo for ACT 2026 features the letters 'ACT' in a large, bold, black font. The letter 'A' has a white dashed line running vertically through its center. The year '2026' is written in a smaller, yellow font inside the 'C'. The letter 'T' has two vertical yellow lines running through its center.

## PATROL PARTNERS WITH FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES DURING VIOLENT CRIME REDUCTION OPERATIONS

At the direction of Governor Mike DeWine, the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) conducted 130 violent crime reduction operations across the state in 2025. These operations, taking place in various cities including, but not limited to, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton and Toledo, underscore the Division's commitment to public safety and provide much-needed assistance to our local law enforcement partners.



*A suspect in Cleveland surrenders after being located in a garbage can, where an illegal firearm was also found.*

Recognizing that every Ohioan deserves to live without the fear of falling victim to a violent crime, the Patrol has partnered with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in focusing on removing repeat violent offenders from the streets.

Throughout the year, personnel from local Patrol posts, the Aviation Unit, the Special Response Team and Criminal Patrol have actively participated in violent crime reduction operations, which have yielded positive results.

During one operation on October 9, troopers assisted local police officers with the apprehension of a 17-year-old who was wanted in connection to a mass shooting in downtown Cleveland the month prior. Aviation played a major role in the arrest, following the suspect's vehicle as it attempted to flee, and then notifying ground units of the suspect's location when it was safe for them to approach.

Following the suspect's arrest, three illegal firearms were recovered from the vehicle they were traveling in, and it was discovered that the vehicle had been reported stolen.

That incident is just one example of how collaboration between agencies directly resulted in safer streets. Collectively in 2025, law enforcement agencies made 437 felony arrests, recovered 175 illegal firearms and recovered 43 stolen vehicles through these operations.

"These statistics reflect violent crimes that have been prevented in our state," said Colonel Charles A. Jones, Patrol superintendent. "Through these initiatives, we are strategically working to make Ohio safer, ensuring those who choose to engage in illegal activity are held accountable."

The OSHP is committed to providing service with a purpose, and in this case, that service is restoring peace to neighborhoods that have been negatively impacted by violence. The Division will continue offering intelligence, personnel and resources to cities across Ohio.

Thank you to all our law enforcement and safety partners who have worked alongside us to make communities safer statewide.

## AUXILIARY STORE DEDICATED IN HONOR OF FIRST AUXILIARY COMMANDER

On Friday, November 21, members of the Ohio State Highway Patrol family gathered at the Patrol Training Academy to dedicate the Auxiliary Major-at-Large Floyd R. Hartpence Auxiliary Store, a tribute to the first commander of the Ohio State Highway Patrol Auxiliary and a leader whose legacy still shapes the Division today.

Auxiliary Major-at-Large Hartpence served as commander from the Auxiliary's founding in 1942 until 1957, guiding a volunteer force created during one of the most demanding moments in the Patrol's history. Formed through the American Legion under the direction of Colonel Lynn E. Black, the Auxiliary quickly grew to more than 5,000 volunteer officers who supported Patrol operations statewide as patrolmen deployed to serve in World War II. Auxiliary Major-at-Large Hartpence presided over monthly council meetings with Patrol leadership, helping develop an organization that became essential to keeping Ohio safe.

During the dedication ceremony, Colonel Jones reflected on the depth of Auxiliary Major-at-Large Hartpence's service, noting that "When the Ohio State Highway Patrol Auxiliary was formed in 1942, the world was in upheaval, and in that moment of extraordinary need, people stepped forward." Hartpence, an Army veteran of World War I, a graduate of The Ohio State University, a longtime educator, a community leader and superintendent of the Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Orphans' Home, embodied that spirit of service in every chapter of his life. His wife, Beulah, also a World War I Navy veteran, shared that same commitment to community and country.

Under Auxiliary Major-at-Large Hartpence's leadership, Auxiliary officers kept posts open when active patrolman numbers were cut nearly in half during wartime. They guarded critical infrastructure, escorted military convoys and responded to natural disasters across the state. Their service provided continuity and stability when Ohio needed it most.

Today, the Auxiliary continues to contribute thousands of hours annually, assisting at crash scenes, supporting troopers during traffic control and special events and providing valuable help during emergencies. The Auxiliary store originally opened in 2018 and has become a gathering place during graduations, open houses and family



*Lieutenant Colonel Jason Sanford, Auxiliary Commander, applauds the newly unveiled dedication plaque.*



*Attendees peruse the Auxiliary Store. The new "Auxiliary Major-at-Large Floyd R. Hartpence" sign can be seen above the doorway.*

events, connecting the public to the Division's mission and supporting programs that strengthen the Auxiliary.

By naming this space the Auxiliary Major-at-Large Floyd R. Hartpence Auxiliary Store, the Patrol honors a leader whose vision still defines the Auxiliary's role more than eight decades later. Representatives from the Patrol Auxiliary, the American Legion and Buckeye Boys State joined in marking this meaningful moment, ensuring that Auxiliary Major-at-Large Hartpence's legacy of volunteer service will continue to inspire all who walk through its doors.

## 28 TROOPERS GRADUATE FROM OHIO STATE HIGHWAY PATROL TRAINING ACADEMY



On November 14, the 177th Academy Class graduated from the Ohio State Highway Patrol Training Academy after 30 weeks of intense training. Director Andy Wilson of the Ohio Department of Public Safety and Colonel Charles A. Jones, Patrol superintendent, provided remarks during the graduation ceremony. Lieutenant Governor Jim Tressel delivered the commencement address to the 28 members of the Patrol's 177th Academy Class. Judge David A. Trimmer, Fairfield County Court of Common Pleas, issued the Oath of Office.

Trooper Cameron M. Miller, Georgetown Post, was selected as class speaker, and thanked the Training Academy and cadet family members for being supportive during their training. Graduates reported to their assigned posts on November 16.

### Class honors went to the following:

- **Overall Performance** – Trooper Garrett T. Saleski, Toledo Post
- **Top Academics** – Trooper Michael S. Suttles II, Hamilton Post
- **Top Driving** – Trooper Christopher M. Brewer, Wooster Post
- **Top Firearms** – Trooper Keaton R. Syverson, Chardon Post
- **Top Physical Fitness** – Trooper Travis M. Stratton, Defiance Post

## PATROL CELEBRATES 92 YEARS OF SERVICE



On November 15, the Ohio State Highway Patrol celebrated 92 years of dedicated service to the people of Ohio. Patrol family, active and retired, gathered at locations throughout the state to honor the Division.

In a message to the Patrol on November 15, Colonel Charles A. Jones, superintendent, stated, "Colonel Lynn Black reminded those first officers, 'At all times remember that promotion of true safety and the welfare of the people of Ohio should inspire and motivate your work.' Nearly a century later, those words remain our foundation. Our strength has always come from the women and men of our Division, and those who support them."

In the letter, Colonel Jones took time to honor our fallen heroes, recognize our retirees and commend the commitment of our sworn and professional staff. He also thanked our families for the sacrifices they make in support of our mission.

"Most importantly, we thank you for your service and for what you do every day to protect life and promote safety," Colonel Jones affirmed. "Every traffic stop, every call for help and every mile you patrol makes a difference in the lives of Ohioans."

## MEMORIAL SIGN DEDICATION FOR PATROLMAN BIRCHEM

On October 30, members of the Patrol gathered at the Swanton Post for the memorial sign dedication ceremony for Patrolman Jon D. Birchem. The memorial sign is located on the eastbound side of the Ohio Turnpike, near milepost 65.

On February 27, 1967, Patrolman Birchem was fatally injured after losing control of his vehicle during a pursuit of two speeding vehicles in Wood County. He was the first Patrol officer to give his life in the line of duty on the Ohio Turnpike.

During the ceremony, Colonel Charles A. Jones, Patrol superintendent; Executive Director Ferzan Ahmed, P.E., Ohio Turnpike Commission and State Representative Haraz N. Ghanbari spoke.



Chief Engineer/Deputy Executive Director Chris Matta, P.E., Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission (far left); State Representative Haraz N. Ghanbari (second from left); Patrolman Birchem family members; Colonel Charles A. Jones, Ohio State Highway Patrol superintendent (right center); State Representative James M. Hoops (second from right center); Patrolman Birchem family members and State Representative Erika White (far right).



From left: State Representatives Angela King and Roy Klopfenstein, Governor Mike DeWine, Colonel Charles Jones and members of the Kirkendall family.

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Colonel Charles A. Jones, Patrol superintendent, provided remarks at the ceremony, held at the Van Wert Post. State Representatives Roy Klopfenstein and Angela King, the primary sponsors of House Bill 51, also provided remarks. Lieutenant Kirkendall's son, Mike Kirkendall, represented the members of the family.

## HIGHWAY DEDICATION FOR LIEUTENANT KIRKENDALL

On November 3, the eastbound and westbound lanes of U.S. 33, between county Road 191 and Boundry Road in Van Wert County were dedicated to Ohio State Highway Patrol Lieutenant James A. Kirkendall. He was killed in the line of duty as a result of a traffic crash on October 28, 1970. The crash involved two trucks on U.S. 33, west of St. Johns in Auglaize County.

## TROOPER MILBURN, TROOPER JANNEY RECOGNIZED DURING MILITARY AWARDS

On November 12, two members of the Ohio State Highway Patrol were recognized during the Ohio Department of Public Safety Military Service Awards ceremony. Trooper Shawn F. Milburn, Cambridge District Criminal Patrol, earned a 2025 Military Service Award and Trooper Nelson C. Janney, Wilmington District Commercial Enforcement, earned a 2025 Military Service Award Honorable Mention.

The awards are given to employees who are veterans, retired military or actively serving in the Armed Forces in the Guard or Reserve. Nominations are generated by their fellow employees. The awards not only recognize their service to our country, but their continuing service to Ohioans through their work at the Department of Public Safety.

Speakers and award presenters included Brigadier General Matthew Woodruff, Adjutant General for the Ohio National Guard and Ohio Department of Public Safety Director Andy Wilson. Now Captain Tiffiany L. Meeks, Strategic Communications Advisor and chair of the Ohio Department of Public Safety Military Committee, acted as emcee.

Trooper Milburn's military service began in 1994 in the U.S. Army as a tank mechanic, serving with the 82nd Airborne Division, 2nd Infantry Division and 3rd Infantry Division before deploying to Iraq with the 660th Transportation Company. Rising to the rank of staff sergeant, he led fuel convoys through hostile terrain in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

He joined the Patrol in 2005 as a member of the 145th Academy Class. He earned his commission in January of the following year and was assigned to the Canton Post. As a trooper, he has also served at the New Philadelphia Post. He was named Post Trooper of the Year in 2011 and received the District Trooper Recognition Award twice. He earned the Criminal Patrol Award 13 times and the Ace Award for excellence in auto larceny enforcement once. In 2024, he earned the Master Trooper designation.

Since 2006, Trooper Janney has served in the Ohio Army National Guard, completing five deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay and the southwest border.

Rising to the rank of sergeant first class, he has led soldiers as a platoon sergeant, watch commander and detachment sergeant, guiding teams through complex missions with skill and integrity. He is decorated with the Combat Action Badge, Order of the Marechaussee and Army Meritorious Service Medal.

He joined the Patrol in April 2014 as a member of the 156th Academy Class. He earned his commission in October of the same year and was assigned to the Dayton Post. In 2024, he earned the Master Trooper designation.

Ahead of the ceremony, Lieutenant Colonel Chuck Linek, along with directors of the Ohio Department of Public Safety's ten divisions, signed a Statement of Support for the Guard and Reserve. The signature is a public affirmation of the Patrol's commitment to military service members who serve part-time in the National Guard and Reserve forces. The Statement of Support Program began in 1972 and has since been signed by hundreds of thousands of employers across the country.



*Brigadier General Matthew Woodruff, Adjutant General for the Ohio National Guard; Trooper Shawn F. Milburn and Ohio Department of Public Safety Director Andy Wilson.*



*Brigadier General Matthew Woodruff, Adjutant General for the Ohio National Guard; Trooper Nelson C. Janney and Ohio Department of Public Safety Director Andy Wilson.*

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OHIO STATE HIGHWAY PATROL RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

Retired Colonel Butch Collins and retired Captain Brenda Collins were presented with a clock for their work with State Troopers of Ohio.



The Ohio State Highway Patrol Retirees' Association held its 50th Anniversary Business Meeting and Dinner on November 8 at the Aladdin Shrine Center in Grove City.

The organization, now 1,300 members strong, began as an idea in 1975. Through a planning group and committees, the group adopted bylaws during their first meeting on November 8, 1975, when the association was officially created.

For many, the association has turned into something more than just a business meeting; it's a chance to reconnect to the Patrol.

"We have a really good group," retired Colonel Richard "Butch" Collins said about the Retirees' Association. "It allows me to continue friendships that were formed during my time in the Patrol!"

During the annual meeting, the attendees heard reports from officers and retired Colonel Thomas W. Rice, State Troopers of Ohio. Colonel Rice presented Butch Collins and retired Captain Brenda Collins with a clock on behalf of the State Troopers of Ohio for their work and dedication.

This year, the association remembered 41 retirees, 17 widows, six spouses and one active member during the memorial ceremony. The ceremony honored those who have passed away since the last annual meeting.

Following the memorial, elections for the new board were held.

### How It Started

- FIRST DUES WERE \$5 PER YEAR.
- JOHN BISHOP WAS SELECTED AS CHAIRMAN TO DRAFT THE NEW ASSOCIATION'S BYLAWS.
- COMMITTEE MEMBERS INCLUDED

WENDELL LOHR, GARNET MOORE, JIM GIBBS AND WALT FENDER.

- THE FIRST OFFICERS ELECTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING WERE: JOHN BISHOP, PRESIDENT; WENDELL LOHR, VICE PRESIDENT; BOB RICHARDSON, SECRETARY AND ED HANN, TREASURER.

### How It's Going

- ANNUAL DUES ARE \$12 PER YEAR, OR \$1 PER MONTH.
- MEMBERSHIP IS NOW OPEN TO ALL EMPLOYEES, BOTH SWORN AND NON-SWORN, WHO RETIRE FROM THE OHIO STATE HIGHWAY PATROL.



Newly elected officers. From left: Butch Collins, past president; Brenda Collins, treasurer; Lydia Frey, secretary; Virginia Fogt, 2nd vice president; Dale LaRue, 1st vice president and Bob Booker, president.

### Executive Board Members:

- **Bob Booker**, President,
- **Dale LaRue**, 1st Vice President
- **Virginia Fogt**, 2nd Vice President
- **Lydia Frey**, Secretary
- **Brenda Collins**, Treasurer
- **Butch Collins**, Past President
- **Charles Jones**, Superintendent
- **Phil Hurlbert**, Chaplain

There are many opportunities for retirees to get involved in the Retirees' Association. There are four events a year, including the Snowbird in Florida, the annual Retiree Cookout, the Sunbird (now held in Waldo) and the annual business meeting.

# OHIO TURNPIKE MARKS 70 YEARS OF SERVICE, AWARDED DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDALLION



Chief Engineer/Deputy Executive Director, Chris Matta, P.E.; Ohio Representative Haraz N. Ghanbari; Office of Budget and Management Chief Legal Counsel Paul Disantis; Captain William P. Haymaker, Cleveland District Headquarters commander; Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission Secretary-Treasurer, Guy C. Coviello; Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission Executive Director, Ferzan M. Ahmed, P.E.; Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission Vice-Chair, Sandra K. Barber; Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission Chairman, Jerry N. Hruby; Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission Member Colleen Shay Murray; Ohio Senator Jane M. Timken; Staff Lieutenant Richard P. Reeder, Cleveland District Headquarters assistant commander and Ohio Department of Transportation Member Ex-Officio Gery Noirof.

In 2025, Ohio celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Ohio Turnpike, a vital corridor for travel and commerce. Central to its success has been the enduring partnership between the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission, ensuring safety and security for millions of motorists.

To honor this milestone, Captain William P. Haymaker and Staff Lieutenant Richard P. Reeder presented the Distinguished Service Medallion to the Commission on October 20, recognizing its decades of commitment to roadway safety and public service.

Year	# Personnel Assigned	# Vehicles Traveled
1955	45	9,980,954
1963	72	13,864,482
1975	91	20,075,000
2003	102	48,282,000
2005	109	51,149,497
2012	89	49,230,000
2015	73	53,400,000
2023	58	50,723,000

\*Includes sworn trooper, sergeant, lieutenant, staff lieutenant and captain ranks.

## TURNPIKE FACTS

- The first 22 miles of the turnpike connected the Eastgate Terminal to the Pennsylvania Turnpike.
- The remaining 219 miles to the Indiana border were opened on October 1, 1955.
  - o It was the longest single stretch of highway ever opened at one time in the United States.
  - o Opening Day traffic totaled 44,000 vehicles.
- In October 1955, the Turnpike Commission had a fixed toll of \$3 to drive a passenger car the entire length of the 241-mile turnpike. The cost is now \$19.

## INTELLIGENCE UNIT: ADVANCING PUBLIC SAFETY THROUGH INFORMATION



From left to right: Public Safety Intel Analyst (PSIA) Matthew L. Decker, PSIA Taylor Britton, PSIA Brydan T. Lohr, and PSIA Sarah J. Rhodes.

Every day and night, across Ohio's roadways and communities, critical decisions are being made in moments where accurate information can change outcomes. Supporting those decisions is the Ohio State Highway Patrol Intelligence Unit, a 24/7 operation that serves as a force multiplier for the Patrol and for law enforcement agencies across the state.

The Intelligence Unit is located within the Statewide Terrorism Analysis and Crime Center, Ohio's only 24/7/365 fusion center, and works alongside the Patrol's Watch Desk and Statewide Dispatch as part of the Hub. While the Hub provides the structure for coordinated response, the Intelligence

Unit delivers the analysis, context and actionable intelligence that officers and investigators rely on when it matters most.

Staffed by highly trained public safety intelligence analysts, the unit provides both real-time and long-term investigative support. Real-time assistance is the most frequently requested service and focuses on urgent situations where officers need immediate answers. Analysts assist with subject identification, license plate reader searches, phone number and address lookups, next-of-kin notifications, open-source research and threat assessments. In urgent situations, this support has helped locate fleeing suspects, identify vehicles tied to violent crime and even find individuals in crisis before harm could occur.

In addition to real-time support, analysts provide in-depth investigative assistance throughout the life of complex cases. Each analyst develops expertise in at least one specialized area, including force protection, human trafficking, drug interdiction and vehicle theft, fraud and money laundering, and gangs and criminal organizations. This allows the unit to support investigations involving organized crime, large-scale fraud, drug trafficking networks and violent offenders.

A significant capability offered by the Intelligence Unit is advanced geolocation analysis. Using cellular device data, social media information and connected vehicle data, analysts can map historical and real-time movements that generate investigative leads or support evidence. Many local agencies do not have the resources to maintain this level of specialization, making the Intelligence Unit a critical partner. Several analysts are certified experts in cellular mapping and regularly provide courtroom testimony that supports successful prosecutions.

The unit's impact continues to grow. In 2025, the Intelligence Unit processed its highest number of requests ever, handling nearly 26,000 intelligence requests, a 24% increase from the previous year. More than 5,400 of those requests came from outside agencies, reflecting the trust and reliance placed on the unit statewide.

From supporting officers during traffic stops to dismantling organized criminal networks, the Intelligence Unit plays an essential role in safeguarding Ohio every day. As technology evolves and threats become more complex, the unit remains committed to providing timely, accurate intelligence that protects officers, strengthens investigations and keeps communities safe.

## TAILOR SHOP: WOVEN INTO THE PATROL'S HISTORY

Since the earliest days of the Ohio State Highway Patrol, professionalism has been reflected in appearance. When the Patrol was established in 1933, Director O.W. Merrell sought a uniform that was original, dignified and easily distinguishable from other law enforcement agencies. That design, refined over time but unmistakably familiar, has become one of the most enduring symbols of the Patrol.

For decades, the Tailor Shop has operated as a cornerstone of the Division, ensuring that every uniformed employee presents a consistent, professional image. While its work often happens behind the scenes, its influence is visible across the state each day. From cadets just beginning their careers to seasoned troopers, the shop supports the full lifecycle of service within the Patrol.

At its core, the Tailor Shop is built around service to people. Daily interactions with troopers and employees foster connections that often span an entire career. Inventory Control Specialist 2 Gregory A. Morrison described that sense of purpose, "Helping and interacting with all the troopers and employees and feeling like a big help out in the field is what I enjoy most."

The Tailor Shop also reflects a long tradition of craftsmanship. Generations of tailors have adapted to changes in materials, equipment and technology while maintaining the same precision that has defined the unit since its early years. Tailor Meagan S. Keller finds fulfillment in that craft. "I really just love the sewing part of my job," she said. "The fact that I have a job where the main thing I do every day is sew is still amazing to me."

One of the most meaningful responsibilities of the Tailor Shop has always been outfitting new cadet classes. This tradition connects today's recruits to those who wore the uniform before them. Fittings mark a pivotal moment in each cadet's journey. Keller added, "Being a part of helping these cadets reach their goals is very fulfilling, capturing the significance of that experience."

There are moments during cadet fittings that remain timeless. Seeing a cadet put on their uniform for the first time often brings a visible shift in confidence and pride. Tailor Belva "Carma" King shared, "The minute they put that blouse on and it fits so well, that always makes me smile." It is a moment that reflects both the craftsmanship of the Tailor Shop and the meaning of the uniform itself.

Behind the fitting rooms, the stockroom operation reflects the same legacy of precision and readiness. Thousands of uniform and equipment items are carefully tracked through a customized inventory system designed to support the Patrol's unique operational needs. Regular inventory counts and daily coordination ensure that every item is available when needed, supporting both routine operations and critical incident response.

Teamwork has always been essential to the Tailor Shop's success. Each role within the section is interconnected, requiring close collaboration. That collective effort earned national recognition, with the Patrol named a best dressed state law enforcement agency in 2003 and again in 2014, honors rooted in professionalism and pride.

Today, the Tailor Shop remains a vital link between the Patrol's past and present. Through craftsmanship and dedication to the people they serve, the section continues to uphold a standard established more than 90 years ago, ensuring the Patrol's history is not only remembered, but worn with pride.



*Generations of past and present Tailor Shop employees gather for a photo with Colonel Charles A. Jones. Shown left to right: Tailor Meagan S. Keller, Tailor Mirjana A. Risteska, Tailor Belva C. King, Colonel Charles A. Jones, and retired Tailors Mary Hart and Virginia Bryant.*

## TAILOR SHOP OPEN HOUSE

On December 12, the Ohio State Highway Patrol's Tailor Shop held an open house. The open house highlighted the Tailor Shop employees' dedication and contributions to the Patrol. Displays adorned the halls and walls of the Tailor Shop, showcasing the work that has been completed through the years.

Retired tailors returned to the Tailor Shop to take part in the festivities. Major Matthew L. Them served as emcee, while Colonel Charles A. Jones and Administrative Officer 2 Alexander C. Ell gave brief remarks. Reverend Edward G. Zell, Jackson District, provided the invocation and benediction.

## RECRUITMENT

Recruitment has been a long-standing priority for our Division, and the steady rise in applications reflects the sustained commitment across every district and section. Rather than relying on short-term initiatives, we have continued a coordinated, "all-hands" approach, partnering with the Strategic Communications Unit to expand awareness, share authentic stories of service and highlight the opportunities that come with joining the Ohio State Highway Patrol. This consistent effort has allowed us to build momentum year over year, while ensuring our message reaches people where they are.

Our District Recruit Teams (DRTs) have been central to that success. Their presence at community events, schools and local gatherings, paired with diligent follow-up, has directly resulted in both an increase in QR code scans and completed applications, helping us surpass 3,500 applications in 2025, a 48% increase over the previous year.

We have also enhanced the applicant process to improve efficiency. With the assistance of the Office of Testing Services, an additional written test was created, which has aided us in processing applicants. Additionally, hearing and vision testing are now completed at the Training Academy following the applicant's completion of the written and physical testing. These enhancements have streamlined the process.

Looking ahead, continued emphasis on engagement, along with the implementation of a text-to-apply feature, will further modernize our efforts. This new feature will allow for anyone interested in joining the Ohio State Highway Patrol to instantly start the application process by texting "joinOSHP" to 614-654-OSHP.

The Office of Recruitment remains grateful for the leadership and teamwork across every district and section as we work together to support the next generation of State Troopers.

## HOLIDAY CARD CONTEST



Andrew Boyer, a seventh-grade student from Tipp City, created this year's Ohio State Highway Patrol holiday card. The card was created during the Patrol's annual holiday card contest, which started on November 1 and concluded on November 15.

Since 2019, children have

had the opportunity to design the Patrol's holiday card. The winning artwork was used as Colonel Charles Jones' official holiday card and displayed on Patrol social media accounts.

Children's artwork had to meet specific requirements for the contest. Ohio children 12 years of age and younger were invited to submit designs that featured the Ohio State Highway Patrol Stetson, the Ohio flag, the Patrol's Flying Wheel emblem and the message, "Happy Holidays from Our Family to Yours."

Colonel Jones presented Andrew with a certificate, his framed artwork and a challenge coin. The presentation was made on December 22 at the Springfield Post.

Juliana Oboczy, a sixth-grade student from Marysville, came in second place, while Jaxon Boyer, a fifth-grade student from Tipp City, came in third.

TEXT "joinOSHP"



to 614-654-OSHP

**JOIN TODAY**

## SERGEANT LEE HELPS WOMAN FROM THE COMMUNITY CELEBRATE 10 YEARS SOBER



*Sergeant Brett Lee, Kimberly Slavens and Colonel Charles A. Jones.*

On December 5, Kimberly Slavens did what she has done for the past nine years; she walked through the doors of the Lebanon Post looking for Sergeant Brett Lee. With her was a card with a handwritten note, just like every year. This was the 10th anniversary of Sergeant Lee pulling her over and charging her with an OVI. It's an arrest that she says changed her life.

The annual visit from Slavens has impacted Sergeant Lee as well. Slavens was presented with a service medallion and a license plate to honor her commitment.



*Scan the QR code to view more on this story from WCPO.*

## TROOPERS ASSIST IN NATIONAL HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

On November 15, Trooper Rebecca S. Sexton, Jackson District Licensing and Commercial Standards, and Sergeant Christopher J. Finley, Chillicothe Post, proudly partnered with the U.S. Forest Service to ensure the safe transport of the U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree. The 53-foot red fir, named Silver Belle, hailed from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in Nevada. The tree made its way from Nevada, traveling through Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky and into Ohio.



On December 11, Sergeant Tyler S. Ross, Strategic Communications Unit, and Trooper Jacques A. Illanz, Lebanon Post, had the honor to provide an escort for Wreaths Across America as they began their trip from Monroe to I-75 and headed for Dayton. On December 13, wreath-laying ceremonies took place at more

than 5,200 locations in all 50 states, at sea and abroad to honor our service members. As each wreath is placed, the volunteers say their names out loud to ensure their memory lives on and thanking them for their service.

## SERGEANT BOYER RECOGNIZED BY THE IACP



On October 21, Sergeant Matthew D. Boyer (shown second from left), Warren District Criminal Patrol, received the 2025 International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Leadership in Looking Beyond the License Plate Award. Sergeant Boyer was presented the award during the IACP Annual Conference in Denver. The award recognizes the dedication and initiative of individual police officers whose daily efforts during traffic stops play a large part in preventing more severe crimes. The award is designed to substantiate and document the importance of license plates as law enforcement tools and recognize officers who use them to detect both civil traffic violations and further criminal conduct.

In 2024, then Trooper Boyer and his partner K-9 Titus, initiated 1,409 traffic stops resulting in 84 felony arrests, 20 misdemeanor arrests, 17 OVI arrests and the seizure of 17 illegal firearms. Additionally, then Trooper Boyer recovered 27 stolen vehicles, with an estimated value of approximately \$400,000, earning him the Blue Max Award for the most stolen vehicle recoveries for the fourth consecutive year.

## OSHP AND OTSO RECEIVE AAMVA AWARD



On November 5, Major David R. Brown (shown center), Office of Field Operations, accepted the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) Region 3 Informative Writing Award for the Driver Training Bulletin. The event was held at the AAMVA Region 3 Annual Conference held in Minneapolis.

The Patrol and the Ohio Traffic Safety Office (OTSO) work together to provide driver training schools with crash statistics for each of Ohio's 88 counties, released twice annually. Each bulletin includes a spot map showing every injury and fatal crash from the previous year, allowing instructors to localize training to their students. The program began in October 2022.

## U.S. SECRET SERVICE HONORS PATROL EMPLOYEES



*FCS2s Keith Ferguson, Daniel P. Maher and Stewart M.R. Watkins.*

On December 15, members of the Computer Crimes Unit were honored by the United States Secret Service for their work. Major Daniel E. Springs, Office of Criminal Investigations, was in attendance for the awards and recognition.

The National Computer Forensics Institute (NCFI) recognized the Patrol's Computer Crimes Unit during a presentation at the United States Secret Service Columbus office. The NCFI annually recognizes its top 100 state and local law enforcement graduates trained in digital forensic examination techniques. Forensic Computer Specialist 2 (FCS2) Daniel P. Maher and Forensic Computer Specialist 2 John Keith Ferguson each received the award.

In addition, FCS2 Maher and Forensic Computer Specialist 2 Stewart Watkins were recognized nationally for their work. FCS2 Maher received two Significant Case Awards for his forensic work on two separate cases he assisted with from Jackson and Pickaway counties. FCS2 Watkins received one Significant Case Award for his forensic work on a case he assisted with from Belmont County.

## LIEUTENANT CAPLINGER AND FRANKLIN COUNTY DEPUTY BENDER- SMITH PRESENTED WITH DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDALLION

On November 7, Lieutenant Shad E. Caplinger, Circleville Post, and Franklin County Deputy Jordan Bender-Smith were awarded with the Patrol's Distinguished Service Medallion. Colonel Charles A. Jones presented the awards to them at the Columbus District Headquarters. The award resulted from Lieutenant Caplinger's actions on August 23. While on his trip home, he observed a disabled vehicle at the interchange of Interstate 71 and Interstate 270, where a woman was leaning over the concrete barrier wall. He immediately recognized the woman was in danger and engaged in conversation, while positioning himself to prevent her from climbing over the wall. Lieutenant Caplinger used crisis intervention techniques and maintained a calm dialogue with the woman. As Deputy Bender-Smith arrived on scene, both officers worked in a coordinated fashion to safely secure the distraught woman. Together, they successfully convinced her to voluntarily move away from the barrier wall and escorted her to the deputy's patrol vehicle. Their significant actions demonstrate the type of selfless service that distinguishes exceptional law enforcement officers.



## TROOPER BAUMLE PRESENTED WITH DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDALLION



On November 3, Trooper Grant E. Baumle, Lima Post, was awarded the Patrol's Distinguished Service Medallion for his extraordinary courage and selfless determination. Lieutenant Colonel Chuck Linek presented him with the award in response to his actions on August 12, in which Trooper Baumle responded to a fiery crash in Allen County, where a box truck was in flames and the driver was trapped inside. Without hesitation, Trooper Baumle grabbed his fire extinguisher and climbed into the truck, battling flames around the dashboard and the driver's legs. When the fire reignited, he found a second fire extinguisher. By the time the fire crews arrived on scene, the fire was out. Through his actions, he reduced the flames, saving the driver and buying critical time for other first responders to extract him.

## TROOPER LISTER EARNS FOURTH CONSECUTIVE FITNESS AWARD



On October 3, Trooper Justin P. Lister, Elyria Post, earned a perfect score on his Health and Physical Fitness Evaluation for the fourth consecutive time, setting a new record. He previously earned the perfect score in 2018, 2021 and 2023.

## TROOPER WEPPLER EARNS FITNESS AWARD



On December 12, Colonel Charles A. Jones presented a medallion certificate to Trooper Jhent B. Weppler, Columbus Post, for earning a perfect score on his Health and Physical Fitness Evaluation. He earned the perfect 500 points on November 21, during his first GXT exam since graduating from the Training Academy in November 2023.

## SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST 2 STOCKDALE RECEIVES 40 YEAR CERTIFICATE



On November 5, Colonel Charles A. Jones presented Software Development Specialist 2 Paul R. Stockdale with a certificate for his 40 years of service to the citizens of Ohio.

## PHOTOGRAPHER O'SHEA HONORED



On December 23, during the Operation Santa's Sleigh presentations in Columbus, Photographer Colleen E. O'Shea, Photo Lab, accepted two Light Ohio Blue First Responder Photo Contest awards from Light Ohio Blue Statewide Director Nate Coffield. Photographer O'Shea captured the winning images for both the Specialty Equipment category and Law Enforcement Category 1. This was Photographer O'Shea's third time winning the Specialty Equipment category.

## GHQ



**Critical Communications Center** – Former Ohio State University Marching Band member and current Lieutenant Kelly D. Weakley worked the Ohio State versus Minnesota game on October 4. Lieutenant Weakley was able to stop for a photo with his son, Josh, who continues his legacy as an E-flat cornet player in his second year with the band.

**Security Services** – On October 25, Trooper Tedd M. Bergeron participated in a Trunk-or-Treat at First Baptist Church in Heath.



## DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT — FINDLAY DISTRICT

**Patrol Collaborates with ANGELS Outreach**

On November 20, the Findlay District gathered to provide holiday meals to members of the community for Thanksgiving. They also collect food at other times of the year, like Christmas and Easter. Troopers join forces with the Toledo Police Department, Toledo Fire and Rescue Department, and the Lucas County Sheriff's Office to participate in ANGELS Outreach.

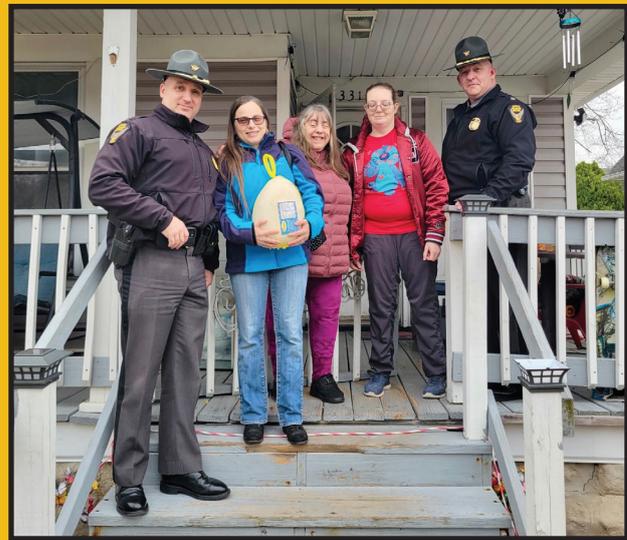
ANGELS Outreach has served Toledo for 30 years and began after its founder Lisa Canales-Smith needed a miracle. She made a promise to dedicate her life to community outreach. ANGELS, which stands for Area Neighbors Getting [Involved] Lovingly and Spiritually, delivered its first food baskets to families in need in 1995. It now serves food baskets to 150 Toledo families and 75 disabled veterans.

The Findlay District has participated for several years by delivering food in collaboration with the program. In the last four years, participation has grown, with approximately 30 troopers participating this year. Following the food delivery in December, Lieutenant Rustun K. Schack, Toledo Post commander, and Sergeant Ryan E. Purpura, Strategic Communications Unit, participated in the ANGELS Outreach Veterans' Dinner.

In addition to serving food, Trooper Logan M. Kirkendall connected with a family while delivering Thanksgiving meals who needed extra support, so the Bowling Green Post "adopted" the family. They collected items to make the children in this family feel special. Trooper Kirkendall and Sergeant David Lopez organized the drive, in addition to an event where the mother joined troopers, half units and social services personnel to wrap the gifts and enjoy a luncheon.

Findlay District Captain William N. Bowers explained that helping with ANGELS Outreach creates an opportunity for everyone to see the excitement and appreciation of the people they meet.

"It's gratifying that your people are willing to go to the extra mile," he said. "It shows the heart of our people."



Scan the QR code to view more of the good work in collaboration with ANGELS Outreach at Christmastime.

## FINDLAY DISTRICT



**Findlay Post –**  
Dispatch Supervisor Cheryl L. Pratt, Sergeant Chad A. Recker and Dispatcher Courtney L. Barth

put together “cake-in-a-bag” kits for a local food pantry, delivering them on November 25.

## CLEVELAND DISTRICT

**Commercial Enforcement –** Lieutenant Todd J. Belcher, Licensing and Commercial Standards, presented an award to Osnaburg Local School District at the Stark County Education Service Center’s 75th Transportation Awards Banquet on October 21. The event celebrated transportation staff from 21 districts.



**Ashland Post –** A Cram the Cruiser event was held on November 1 at the Ashland Walmart. During the event, more than 4,200 pounds of non-perishable food items were collected and delivered to Associated Charities of Ashland.

## BUCYRUS DISTRICT



**Fremont Post –** Trooper Maxwell G. Lambert conducted a DRIVE to Live presentation for Sandusky County CARTEENS on October 16. During the presentation, he discussed saying no to drugs, the dangers of distracted driving and the importance of wearing safety belts.



**Findlay and Bucyrus Districts –** On December 12, troopers from the Findlay and Bucyrus districts, including Trooper Luis M. Rodriguez, joined area law enforcement officers for holiday shopping and Feet on the Street’s 18th annual “12 Kids of Christmas,” held at Imagination Station, a science museum in Toledo.

**Elyria Post –** On December 6, Trooper Justin P. Lister, Trooper Hannah G. Oehlke and Trooper Cyara C. Castillo assisted the North Ridgeville Police Association and other area law enforcement agencies in a Season of Sharing event. Together, they were able to serve nearly 100 area youth and their families.



## WARREN DISTRICT



**Lisbon Post** – On October 18, Lieutenant Daniel W. Morrison participated in “Canal Days,” a community festival in Hanover Township. During the event, he interacted with more than 100 attendees, provided traffic safety materials and took part in the parade.



**Warren Post** – In November, Lieutenant David Zatvarnický and Sergeant Benjamin M. Barnard partnered with Girard High School students and collected approximately 800 cans of food for the Warren Family Mission.

## PIQUA DISTRICT

**Marysville Post** – On December 21, Lieutenant Matthew D. Himes and Trooper Matthew Fulton presented a Saved by the Belt Award to Kenneth Bird. He was presented with the award for making the life-saving decision to buckle up before suffering a crash on U.S. 33 in October.



**Wapakoneta Post** – On December 13, Sergeant Samantha L. Trimboli, Trooper Zachary M. Deitering and Trooper Parker L. Mihm participated in a Season of Sharing event with local families and community partners at the Walmart in Wapakoneta.

## COLUMBUS DISTRICT



**Recruitment, Motor Unit and Electronic Technicians** – On December 5, Patrol personnel shopped with children at Meijer in Hilliard as part of the Patrol’s Season of Sharing initiative, connecting with the community and spreading holiday joy.

**LCS** – On October 10, personnel from Licensing and Commercial Standards and the Office of Recruitment partnered with the Quarter Horse Congress and Dr. Sherry Johnson of Equine Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation to conduct a recruitment event and discuss commercial vehicle safety and load securement.

## CAMBRIDGE DISTRICT

**New Philadelphia Post** – On October 24, Trooper Roy R. Beach, the Carroll County Health Department and Empower Tusc met with students from Buckeye Career Center for a DRIVE to Live presentation.



**New Philadelphia Post** – On November 24, Sergeant Jennifer Makris hosted a career day for Dover High School students at the New Philadelphia Post. Fifteen students toured the post and learned about the many careers the Patrol offers.

## JACKSON DISTRICT

**Chillicothe Post** – In early December, Chillicothe Post troopers visited with children in Ross County. The event was part of the Patrol's Season of Sharing along with our Ross County law enforcement partners.



## WILMINGTON DISTRICT



**Georgetown Post** – On October 6, Sergeant Anthony "Ryan" Day spoke to Manchester High School's Forensic Sciences class. During the presentation, he talked about crime and crash scene investigations, witness interviews and measurement methods.



**Hamilton Post** – Trooper Emily Ann Heglin partnered with Butler County Children Services to spread a little holiday cheer the week before Thanksgiving. Together, they were able to provide 18 turkeys and pies to local families.



**Jackson Post** – On November 15, Trooper Benjamin J. Wallace teamed up with local area Boy Scouts to collect food for the area food pantry.

## RETIREES – By Captain Rob Jackson, Retired

Retired Trooper Jeffrey J. Lawler

Years Served: October 1976 – February 2002

Cadet in the 100th Academy Class

Assignments: Jackson Post, Granville Post, GHQ-OIS, State House

When Trooper Jeff Lawler retired after 26 years, like most retirees, he continued to work. Jeff joined the New River Electrical Corporation as a safety supervisor. He continued in this position until 2015, traveling across the country for safety incident inspections, investigations and training. Transitioning to part-time work, Jeff then worked in a local gun store, and he and his wife Linda focused on spending time with their grandson.

Jeff has had several notable experiences since retiring, including motorcycle trips out West with fellow retirees Jeff Dickey, John Brehl, Jim Brink and John Moore. The trips initiated an interest in visiting the area of Cody, Wyoming with fellow retirees Dan Gibson and Lance Mathess, eventually resulting in Jeff and Linda purchasing a house in the area for summer use. Jeff also continues to ride motorcycles with Dickey, Brehl and Bob Painter.

Jeff and Linda are fully retired now and still live in the Columbus area. One daughter lives close, while their other daughter and son live in Florida. They have several grandchildren and a great-granddaughter, with a great-grandson on the way. "The Highway Patrol was a great place to work and I miss the camaraderie and the people I worked with," Jeff said. "It was always interesting, and I enjoyed the years I spent there."

## AUXILIARY TAKES PART IN ANNUAL SHOE GIVEAWAY

On December 6, the annual Shoe Giveaway took place at St. Mary's Memorial High School. Captain Geoffrey S. Freeman and troopers from the Wapakoneta Post took time out of their days to help more than 400 children receive new shoes, socks and a winter hat. The Patrol's Auxiliary donated 3,000 socks and 3,000 toboggan-style hats for low-income kids during the giveaway. The program is a collaboration between Rock City Church, the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, the Columbus Division of Police, the Patrol and the Auxiliary.

## Where are they now?



Retired Trooper Jeffrey J. Lawler with his wife, Linda.

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## Message From HPRS Executive Director

### Annual Financial Wellness Check-Up

Just like a yearly physical examination with your physician keeps your body in check, an annual financial wellness check-up ensures your financial life stays healthy and on track. It's a proactive way to assess your goals, adjust your strategies and prepare for the unexpected.

Here's why it's worth your time:

- **Spot Trouble Early:** Reviewing your budget, debt and savings annually helps catch issues before they snowball - like creeping credit card balances or underfunded retirement accounts.
- **Align with Life Changes:** Marriage, a new job or a growing family can shift your financial priorities. A check-up helps you recalibrate.
- **Maximize Opportunities:** Are you taking full advantage of employer benefits, flexible spending accounts (FSAs), tax deductions or investment options? A yearly review can uncover hidden value.
- **Boost Confidence:** Knowing where you stand financially reduces stress and empowers smarter decisions.

Whether you're just starting out or fine-tuning your retirement plan, this simple habit can make a big difference. Schedule your financial wellness check-up today, and give your future the attention it deserves.

Best Regards,



Carl Roark, Ph.D. HPRS Executive Director



## OHIO INSURANCE INSTITUTE HOLDS BLUE MAX CEREMONY

On November 13, the Ohio Insurance Institute (OII) continued their support for the Blue Max program and recognized the Patrol's Ace and Award of Excellence recipients from the previous calendar year. OII hosted the ceremony at the Renaissance Hotel in Westerville.

The Blue Max program began in 1972 under the guidance of Colonel Robert Chiamonte to honor officers who recovered the most stolen vehicles with on-the-spot apprehension of suspects in a year. The first recipients were Piqua Post Patrolmen John Spitler and Richard Wells. They each made seven recoveries and apprehensions. The winners received Blue Max medals, recognition ribbons to be worn on their uniforms, exclusive use of new Patrol cars, Blue Max license plates, Blue Max engraved certificates and Superintendent's Citations of Merit.



A year later, Captain Dwight Carey created the Ace Award to encourage participation by more patrolmen. Earning an Ace Award required five stolen vehicle recoveries with apprehensions in a single year. The first recipient was Sergeant John Clifford in 1973. The Superintendent's Certificate of Proficiency was then added to recognize officers who recovered 10 or more stolen vehicles without the apprehension of suspects. Patrolman David Plunkett became the first person to earn that honor in August of 1974.



**MAJOR CHAD J. NEAL,  
OFFICE OF CRIMINAL  
INVESTIGATIONS**

Major Chad J. Neal, Office of Criminal Investigations, retired on November 7 after 33 years of services with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. He began his career with the Ohio State Highway Patrol in July 1992

as a cadet dispatcher. He became a member of the 126th Academy Class in February 1994. He earned his commission in July of the same year and was assigned to the former Walbridge Post. As a trooper, he also served at the Chillicothe and Circleville posts, and the Office of Personnel. He was named Post Trooper of the Year three times. In 2002, he was promoted to sergeant to serve as assistant post commander at the Athens Post. As a sergeant, he also served at the Chillicothe Post and Human Resources. In 2009, he was promoted to lieutenant to serve as post commander at the Zanesville Post. As a lieutenant, he also served in the Administrative Investigations Unit, Critical Communications Center, Security Services and the Circleville Post. In 2014, he was promoted to staff lieutenant to serve as assistant commander at Columbus District Headquarters. In 2017, he was promoted to captain and remained at the Columbus District Headquarters to serve as commander. In 2020, he was promoted to major to command the Planning, Research and Development Unit.

Major Neal earned a certificate of completion from Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command in 2007 and the FBI National Academy in 2019. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in leadership and public safety management from Franklin University in 2023.



**STAFF LIEUTENANT JEFFREY  
S. GREENE,  
CLEVELAND DISTRICT  
HEADQUARTERS**

Staff Lieutenant Jeffrey S. Greene, Cleveland District Headquarters, retired on October 3 after 36 years of service with the state of Ohio and the Ohio State Highway Patrol. He began his Patrol career

in February 1999 as a member of the 133rd Academy Class. He earned his commission in July of that year and was assigned to the Ravenna Post. As a trooper, he also served at the Cleveland Operations, Warren Post, Office of Field Operations, Warren District Criminal Patrol Unit and Special Response Team. He earned both the Criminal Patrol Award and the Ace Award for excellence in auto larceny enforcement twice. In 2013, he was promoted to sergeant and assigned to the Warren District Criminal Patrol Unit. As a sergeant, he earned the Criminal Patrol Award. He was promoted to lieutenant in 2016, and remained in the Warren District Criminal Patrol Unit. As a lieutenant, he also served at the Ravenna Post. In 2021, he was promoted to staff lieutenant and was assigned to the Warren District Headquarters. He also served as the captain of the Warren District. In September 2025, he was presented with the Ohio State Highway Patrol Marksmanship Award.

Staff Lieutenant Greene earned a Masters of Business Administration degree in strategic leadership from Trident University International in 2022. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Youngstown State in 2020. In 2018, he received a certificate of completion from the FBI National Academy.

Staff Lieutenant Greene served in the United States Army and Ohio Army National Guard from 1989 to 2011.



**STAFF LIEUTENANT  
DOUGLAS A. HAMMAN,  
BUCYRUS DISTRICT  
HEADQUARTERS**

Staff Lieutenant Douglas A. Hamman, Bucyrus District Headquarters, retired on October 3 after 31 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. He joined the Patrol in February 1994 as a member of the 126th Academy Class. He earned his commission in July of the same year and was assigned to the Ashland Post. As a trooper, he was also assigned to the Mansfield Post and Bucyrus District Investigations. In 2007, he was promoted to sergeant and was assigned to the Bucyrus Post. As a sergeant, he also served at the Bucyrus District Criminal Patrol and the Northwest Regional Criminal Patrol Unit. In 2011, he was promoted to lieutenant and was assigned to the Norwalk Post. He was promoted to staff lieutenant at the Bucyrus District Headquarters in 2018.

Staff Lieutenant Hamman earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in criminal justice from Bluffton College in 1995. In 2014, he received a certificate in advanced leadership training from The Ohio State University's John Glenn College of Public Affairs, Public Safety Leadership Academy.



**LIEUTENANT DAVID E.  
BAILEY, ADMINISTRATIVE  
INVESTIGATIONS UNIT**

Lieutenant David E. Bailey, Administrative Investigations Unit, retired on November 7 after 29 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the state of Ohio. He joined the Patrol in September 2000 as a member of the 136th Academy Class. He earned his commission in March of the following year and was assigned to the Cambridge Post. As a trooper, he was also assigned to the Zanesville Post. In 2008, he was promoted to sergeant and assigned to the Cambridge Post to serve as assistant post commander. As a sergeant, he also served at the Training Academy and Administrative Investigations Unit. In 2022, he was promoted to lieutenant and remained in the Administrative Investigations Unit.

In 1994, Lieutenant Bailey earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Muskingum University.



**LIEUTENANT BRETT W.  
GOCKSTETTER,  
MILAN POST / D2**

Lieutenant Brett W. Gockstetter, Milan Post, retired on October 17 after 27 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. He joined the Patrol in October 1998 as a member of the 132nd Academy Class. He earned his commission in April of the following year and was assigned to the Sandusky Post. As a trooper, he was named Post Trooper of the Year in 2001. In 2005, he was promoted to sergeant and transferred to the Mansfield Post to serve as assistant post commander. As a sergeant, he also served at the Fremont Post and the Public Affairs Unit. In 2013, he was promoted to lieutenant and transferred to the Milan Post to serve as post commander. As a lieutenant, he also served at the Sandusky Post.

In 1998, Lieutenant Gockstetter earned a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice from Ashland University.



**LIEUTENANT MARK  
W. NICHOLS,  
CRIMINAL PATROL**

Lieutenant Mark W. Nichols, Piqua and Wilmington districts Criminal Patrol, retired on October 1 after 26 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. He joined the Patrol in June 1999 as a member of the 134th Academy Class. He earned his commission in December of the same year and was assigned to the Batavia Post. As a trooper he was named Post Trooper of the Year in 2002. He was promoted to sergeant and assigned to the Springfield Post in 2006 to serve as assistant post commander. In 2012, he was promoted to lieutenant of the Dayton Post to serve as post commander.

In 2014, Lieutenant Nichols received a certificate in advanced leadership training from The Ohio State University's John Glenn College of Public Affairs, Public Safety Leadership Academy.

Lieutenant Nichols served in the United States Army from 1991 to 1993.



**LIEUTENANT JAMES S. SCHLOTTERBECK,  
WILMINGTON DISTRICT INVESTIGATIONS**

Lieutenant James S. Schlotterbeck, Wilmington District Investigations, retired on December 1 after 26 years of service with the state of Ohio and the Ohio State Highway Patrol. He joined

the Patrol in September 2000 as a member of the 136th Academy Class. He earned his commission in March of the following year and was assigned to the Dayton Post. As a trooper, he also served at the Piqua Post, Office of Investigative Services and Columbus District Investigations. In 2016, he was promoted to sergeant and assigned to Wilmington District Investigations. In 2022, he was promoted to lieutenant and remained at Wilmington District Investigations.

Lieutenant Schlotterbeck received an Associate of Applied Science degree in criminal justice from Sinclair Community College in 2001.



**SERGEANT HEATH G. STRAWSER,  
LANCASTER POST / D6**

Sergeant Heath G. Strawser, Lancaster Post, retired on October 20 after 25 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. He joined the Patrol in September 2000 as a member of the 136th Academy Class. He

earned his commission in March of the following year and was assigned to the Circleville Post. In 2014, he was promoted to sergeant and assigned to the West Jefferson Post to serve as assistant post commander. As a sergeant, he also served at the Athens and Chillicothe posts.

Sergeant Strawser earned an Associate of Applied Science degree in criminal justice from Columbus State Community College in 2025.

He served in the U.S. Army from 1994 to 1999.



**TROOPER ROBERT T. BAILEY,  
LEBANON POST / D8**

Trooper Robert T. Bailey, Lebanon Post, retired on December 12 after 31 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. He joined the Patrol in February 1994 as a member of the 126th Academy Class. He earned his commission in

July of the same year and was assigned to the Bucyrus Post. He earned the District Chiaramonte Humanitarian Award in 2011. As a trooper, he also worked at the Mount Gilead and Wilmington posts. In 2024, he earned the Master Trooper designation.



**TROOPER WILLIAM L. HEAD,  
CHARDON POST / D4**

Trooper William L. Head, Chardon Post, retired on December 12 after 26 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. He joined the Patrol in February 1999 as a member of the 133rd Academy Class. He earned his commission in July of the same year and was

assigned to the Milan Post. As a trooper, he was also assigned to the Hiram Post. He was named Post Trooper of the Year in 2025.

Trooper Head earned an Associate of Arts degree from Cuyahoga Community College in 1993.



**TROOPER TIFFANY J. KOHLS,  
DELAWARE POST / D6**

Trooper Tiffany J. Kohls, Delaware Post, retired on October 24 after 25 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. She joined the Patrol in February 2000 as a member of the 135th Academy Class. She earned her commission in September of the same year and

was assigned to the Mt. Gilead Post. As a trooper, she also served at the Training Academy and the Bucyrus and Mansfield posts.

In 1996, Trooper Kohls earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology from The Ohio State University.



**TROOPER THOMAS A. PALMER, WEST JEFFERSON POST / D6**

Trooper Thomas A. Palmer, West Jefferson Post, retired on October 3 after more than 23 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. He joined the Patrol in October 2001 as a member of the 138th Academy Class. He earned

his commission in April of the following year and was assigned to the Springfield Post. As a trooper, he was also assigned to the Granville Post. In 2024, he earned the Master Trooper designation.



**MOTOR CARRIER ENFORCEMENT INSPECTOR DOUGLAS A. BELL, CLEVELAND DISTRICT COMMERCIAL ENFORCEMENT**

Motor Carrier Enforcement Inspector Douglas A. Bell, Cleveland District Commercial Enforcement, retired on November

28 after 39 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the citizens of Ohio. He began his state service in 1986 with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio. He joined the Patrol in March 1995 as a motor carrier enforcement inspector assigned to Medina Post. He earned the District Motor Carrier Enforcement Inspector of the Year award three times.

Motor Carrier Enforcement Inspector Bell served in the U. S. Navy from 1976-1980.



**ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONAL 4 LISA M. CLOUSE, FINDLAY DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS**

Administrative Professional 4 Lisa M. Clouse, Findlay District Headquarters, retired on October 31 after 41 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

She joined the Patrol in April 1982 as a communications technician at the Findlay District Headquarters. In 1985, she became a cadet dispatcher. In 1988, she was promoted to dispatcher and transferred to the Findlay Post. As a dispatcher, she was named Post Dispatcher of the Year three times and District Dispatcher of the Year once. In 1993, she became a clerk 3 at the Findlay Post and was named secretary there in 1994. In 1997, she was presented with the Ohio Department of Public Safety's State Employee of the Year award. In 1999, she became a driver license examiner 1 assigned to the Bucyrus District. As a driver license examiner 1, she also worked in the Findlay District. In 2004, she returned to the Findlay Post to work as a secretary. As a secretary, she also worked at the Findlay District Headquarters. In 2007, she was promoted to executive secretary 1 and remained at the Findlay District Headquarters. In 2011, she was promoted to administrative professional 4 and remained at the Findlay District Headquarters. She was named District Employee of the Year in 2022.



**PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR 3 LAURA L. COX, OFFICE OF PERSONNEL**

Program Administrator 3 Laura L. Cox, Office of Personnel, retired on November 28 after 34 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the state of Ohio. She joined the Patrol in 1991 as a researcher 2 assigned to the

Office of Personnel. In 2011, she became a researcher 3, and in 2013 was promoted to program administrator 3. She served her entire career in the Office of Personnel.

Program Administrator 3 Cox, earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration from Franklin University in 1989. She also earned a Bachelor of Science degree in human resource management from Franklin University in 1991.



**ADMINISTRATIVE  
PROFESSIONAL 1  
TERESA J. ELSWICK,  
CHILICOTHE POST / D9**

Administrative Professional 1 Teresa J. Elswick, Chillicothe Post, retired on November 14 after 17 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. She joined the Patrol in 2008 as a dispatcher assigned to the West

Jefferson Dispatch Center. As a dispatcher, she also worked at the Jackson and Lancaster dispatch centers. She was named Post Dispatcher of the Year once. In 2015, she became an administrative professional 1 assigned to the Circleville Post. She earned the Employee Recognition Award twice. She also worked as a financial analyst in the Fleet Unit and an administrative professional 3 in Finance and Logistics.



**PROJECT MANAGER 2 JEFFREY  
W. GRAYSON,  
SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE**

Project Manager 2 Jeffery W. Grayson, Superintendent's Office, retired on December 5 after 32 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the state of Ohio. He joined the Patrol in June 1993 as a college intern. In 1995, he became

a researcher assigned to Security and Communications. In 1998, he earned the Employee Recognition Award. He served as a public information officer 1, public information officer 2 and administrative assistant 3 in the Public Affairs Unit. In 2003, Grayson was the Ohio Department of Public Safety's Communications Director for the Ohio Department of Public Safety. He served as a project manager in the Superintendent's Office from 2011-2013 and then in the Director's Office. In 2018, he transferred to Finance and Logistics, assigned to the Statewide Terrorism Analysis & Crime Center. In 2023, he returned to working with the Public Affairs Unit, and in 2023 transferred to the Superintendent's Office.

Project Manager 2 Grayson earned a Master of Arts degree in journalism from The Ohio State University in 1994. In 1991, he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in media arts from the University of Arizona.



**DISPATCHER BARBARA L.  
MICHAELS,  
SPRINGFIELD POST / D5**

Dispatcher Barbara L. Michaels, Springfield Post, retired on October 30 after 31 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the state of Ohio. She joined the Patrol in 2006 as a dispatcher assigned to the Piqua Dispatch Center. As a

dispatcher, she also worked at the Springfield Dispatch Center.



**MOTOR CARRIER  
ENFORCEMENT INSPECTOR  
KEITH A. MORRISON,  
COLUMBUS DISTRICT  
COMMERCIAL ENFORCEMENT**

Motor Carrier Enforcement Inspector Keith A. Morrison, Columbus District Commercial Enforcement, retired on November 28 after 32 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

He began his Patrol career in April 1993 as a motor vehicle inspector assigned to Columbus District Commercial Enforcement. In 1995, he became a maintenance repair worker 2 at the Granville Post. In 1996, he returned to the Columbus District Headquarters as a motor vehicle inspector. In 2006, he was promoted to motor carrier enforcement inspector at Columbus District Commercial Enforcement.



**MOTOR VEHICLE INSPECTOR  
WILLIAM D. TAYLOR, PIQUA  
DISTRICT COMMERCIAL  
ENFORCEMENT**

Motor Vehicle Inspector William D. Taylor, Piqua District Commercial Enforcement, retired on October 31 after 32 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the state of Ohio. He began his state career in

1993 with the Ohio Department of Transportation. He joined the Patrol in November 1993 as a motor vehicle inspector assigned to Wilmington District Commercial Enforcement.

Motor Vehicle Inspector Taylor received an Associates of Applied Business degree in computer networking technology from Clark State Community College in 2011.



**DISPATCHER JOHN W. YOUNG,  
SPRINGFIELD POST / D5**

Dispatcher John W. Young, Springfield Post, retired on December 12 after 32 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the state of Ohio. He joined the Patrol in May 2003 as a dispatcher assigned to the Jackson Post. As a dispatcher, he also served at the Jackson Dispatch

Center, Wilmington Dispatch Center and Springfield Dispatch Center. As a dispatcher, he earned the District Dispatcher of the Year Award once and the Post Dispatcher of the Year Award three times.

In 2018, Dispatcher Young became the Piqua District Chaplain where he will continue to serve in that role.

Dispatcher Young earned a Master's Degree in ministry and theology in 2016 and in 2014 earned a Bachelor's Degree in leadership and ministry from Ohio Christian University.

## POST-PATROL PROFESSIONS



### Gary Allen, Chief of Operations, Ohio Industrial Commission

After 32 years of service with the Ohio State Highway Patrol, retired Major Gary Allen approached retirement with intention. Stepping away from a career built on structure and service required adjustment, and he was honest with himself about that transition.

“Initially, I did not approach the transition to my new ‘life’ with the same enthusiasm as many others,” Allen said. “I allowed myself only two days off before moving into my next role, knowing I would miss my previous position and that idle time is not something I enjoy.”

One of the first changes he noticed was adapting to a less regimented workplace culture. Although the environment differed from the Patrol, the leadership principles he developed over three decades remained central to his work. Looking back, Allen says the relationships he built are what stay with him most.

“I loved my job, but what I miss most isn’t the work itself; it’s the people.”

Allen retired as the Patrol was emerging from the COVID 19 pandemic, a period he remembers as meaningful despite its challenges. What stood out most was the unwavering camaraderie within the Division. Even when opinions differed or circumstances were difficult, the team remained united. “We approached every situation as a team, never as individuals,” he said. “We are uncommon amongst uncommon people.”

After retiring, Allen joined the Ohio Industrial Commission, first as Director of Security and later as Chief of Operations. The role allowed him to apply the leadership skills he had refined throughout his Patrol career.

Today, he oversees security, investigations, building maintenance, information technology and daily agency operations, functions essential to the Commission’s mission of serving injured workers and employers across Ohio. “My role involves identifying and resolving problems. I find motivation in facing challenges and keeping things running smoothly in my job.”

His law enforcement and investigative background has proven especially valuable in an environment where emotions can run high. Allen has an ability to connect with individuals from all backgrounds, anticipate challenges and step in, whether in person or over the phone, to defuse tense situations. His presence helps ensure the safety and well being of both employees and visitors.

That same commitment to service continues to shape his life beyond the Patrol. Despite leaving active service, Allen still feels closely connected to the broader public service community, collaborating with other state agencies on matters related to public safety and security. During a recent personal tragedy, the support he received from his public service connections reminded him of the enduring strength of the Patrol family.

“When we say ‘family,’ we truly mean it; they stood by us during our most challenging moments. In many ways, I feel like I never left.”

Allen encourages those nearing retirement to prepare intentionally, focusing on education, financial planning and identifying their next chapter. “Appreciate the invaluable skills you’ve developed throughout your career; it’s easy to take them for granted,” he said. “Embrace this exciting opportunity to pursue what fulfills you as a person.”

## HIGHWAY HIGHLIGHTS

*Comments received via social media.*



“I was on my way back to Connecticut after moving out of school, when my engine started smoking. I pulled over and discovered that my oil was leaking. While waiting for a tow truck, an Ohio State Trooper saw me pulled over with my hood up and he stopped to help. He insisted on staying, with his car angled out to the right lane, lights on, so that passing drivers would move over, until the tow truck arrived (he also gave me the phone # of the tow company with access to the Turnpike, the one State Farm was going to send wasn’t authorized to be on the Turnpike, so they wouldn’t have showed up). We chatted about online school, my upcoming job, and his job while waiting. I know it’s the State Troopers’ jobs to keep the highways safe, but Trooper Binford went above and beyond!”

**DIRECTOR'S  
CORNER**



Department of  
Public Safety



**Ohio State Highway Patrol Family,**

As I am writing this, I am reflecting back over our accomplishments of 2025. I cannot express to you enough what an incredible honor it is to serve with this organization. Every task you are given, every challenge you face, every day you serve, you rise to the demands of this job and you selflessly sacrifice to keep all Ohioans safe.

In 2025, Governor DeWine repeatedly called on you to help others in their greatest hour of need. You responded to every call quickly, compassionately and professionally. One of the best examples of this from 2025 was your response to the flash flooding in Texas. Governor DeWine called me on a weekend and told me we needed to do something to help Governor Abbott in Texas. Within 48 hours you had called for volunteers, organized search teams and were on the road to help a devastated community in another state. I hope you realize how much your compassion and service meant to these people who had lost so much. I could fill every page of this Flying Wheel with examples of how you all go above and beyond the call of duty. Just know that the Governor and I are so proud of each and every one of you and we are looking forward to pushing hard and continued excellence in 2026.

Let's go!

Andy Wilson

Director

**Law Enforcement's Greatest Need: A Chaplain's Perspective**

From where I stand, I see the greatest need in a law enforcement agency is not better equipment or training. It is care for the human behind the badge and those doing the work behind the scenes.

There is a cost to serving in a law enforcement agency. Being exposed to traumatic incidents, taking calls from people on their worst days, or seeing the pain in faces as they arrive at an OSHP facility can take a toll. I can see the fatigue in your eyes when staffing is tight and the calls just keep coming. I see you carry home experiences you would give anything to forget. I see you holding yourself to a standard of "not letting it bother you" as you carry out your daily duties.

Please remember...you are human. We all need support. We all need connection. We all need that someone who will show up on our worst day and make us recognize that we are not alone.

My goal for all OSHP chaplains is simple: show up, listen and remind you that you matter as much as your job duties. Any of our chaplains can help direct you towards the resources you need, whether it is spiritual, mental or emotional. Having a good foundation in those areas will definitely help you as you carry out your life's calling. As a team, we try to be attentive. If we miss you during a post or facility visit and you would like to speak with one of us, please call. We are always here and happy to support you in any way we can!

You are seen. You are valued. You are not alone.

Blessings!

Reverend Phil Hurlbert

State Chaplain

**CHAPLAIN'S  
CORNER**





# The Lighthouse

Mental Health Resources for Your Voyage Through Life's Challenges

## Taking Care of Yourself: Strength in Asking for Help

In this profession, we train to take care of everyone else first. We run toward chaos, absorb trauma, manage stress and then respond to the next person in need. Over time, that constant exposure takes a toll mentally, physically and emotionally. When left unaddressed, the weight of the job can quietly push some toward unhealthy coping strategies, including substance misuse. Talking openly about that reality is about honesty and taking care of ourselves and each other.

Substance use disorders in first responders rarely begin with deliberate choices. More often, they develop gradually as a way to manage cumulative stress, disrupted sleep, intrusive memories or the pressure to stay composed no matter what the call brings. What starts as a way to "take the edge off" can slowly become something that consumes more time, energy and mental space than intended.

One Patrol member, Trooper Steven E. Robison, Cleveland District Commercial Enforcement, chose to share his experience to help others see that asking for help can lead to positive change. "Since getting sober, every aspect of my life has improved – physically, mentally, spiritually and in my relationships," he shared. His message is a reminder that seeking support can lead to renewed health and a better quality of life both on and off duty.

What matters most in stories like his is not the struggle itself, but what happens when someone reaches out. Support from supervisors, peers and the Division can remove barriers and allow members to focus on getting well. Recovery often requires stepping back, prioritizing mental and physical health, and accepting help, none of which diminish professionalism or commitment to service.

Trooper Robison now serves on the Members Assistance Team, offering peer support and helping others navigate resources. He is also a peer with the Post Critical Incident Seminar with the Ohio ASSIST program and a sponsor for others wanting to overcome their addictions. His involvement reflects a broader truth, peers who have walked through recovery can play a vital role in reminding others that they are not alone and that help is both available and effective.

Stigma remains one of the most significant challenges in addressing substance use and mental health concerns in this line of work. The belief that stress, exhaustion, or heavy drinking are simply "part of the job" can keep people suffering in silence. Left unaddressed, these issues rarely improve and often deepen over time.

Taking care of yourself is an important part of taking care of others. Paying attention to warning signs, prioritizing rest and mental health and reaching out early can protect careers, families and lives. If you or someone you work with is struggling, know that support exists within the Patrol and beyond. Asking for help can be the beginning of a healthier, stronger future for you and for the Patrol family.

**Even in rough waters, there is light. Support and recovery are always available. Scan the QR codes below to find links on recovery options.**



< Alcoholics Anonymous



Meeting Guide >

**NEED HELP?** If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text 988, or chat [988Lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) for 24/7, confidential support.

If you are a current OSHP employee, visit the link to "Mental Health & Wellness" under The Gateway.

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