

# Ohio State Highway Patrol

## Media Release

General Headquarters • Columbus, Ohio



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## **Three at the Mt. Gilead Post Awarded Superintendent's Citation of Merit for life-saving actions**

*Civilian awarded Certificate of Recognition*

COLUMBUS – Three sworn officers from the Mt. Gilead Post of the Ohio State Highway Patrol and a civilian were honored today for their life-saving actions during a traffic crash that resulted from a wrong-way driver on Interstate 71, near milepost 147, in Morrow County on September 11, 2010.

Sgt. J. Adam Burkhart, Sgt. Justin C. Hurlbert and Tpr. Paul J. Shore were presented the highest form of honor; the Superintendent's Citation of Merit Award, and Jeffrey Yoder, 36, of Wooster, was presented with the Certificate of Recognition by Colonel David W. Dicken, Patrol superintendent, at a ceremony at the Mt. Gilead Post today.

At approximately 12:39 a.m. on September 11, 2010, troopers from the Mt. Gilead Post were dispatched to a report of a wrong-way driver traveling southbound in the northbound lanes of I-71. Despite the quick response, the wrong-way driver struck another vehicle head-on. Sgt. Hurlbert, who was first on the scene, observed one of the vehicles in the northbound lanes with heavy damage and a fire in its engine compartment. As Sgt. Burkhart arrived he observed the second vehicle in the median with heavy smoke coming from the engine compartment. Both vehicles presented imminent danger to the occupants and the vast number of passing motorists.

As Sgt. Hurlbert approached the first vehicle, he found the doors were locked and the lone female occupant was unresponsive. Sgt. Hurlbert used his baton to break the driver door window. He and a bystander attempted to free the trapped woman, but they were unable to pry open the door enough to get her out. With the engine fire moving toward the passenger compartment, Sgt. Hurlbert tried to control it with his extinguisher, but he could not stop the flames from spreading. He then broke the left rear window and opened that door. As other bystanders continued fighting the fire with extinguishers, Sgt. Hurlbert entered the vehicle, which by now was filled with heavy smoke and fire retardant dust. He forcefully pulled on the driver seat back, breaking it backward to allow access to the driver. With assistance from a bystander, Sgt. Hurlbert carefully pulled the woman through the back seat and out the rear door. After the woman was moved a safe distance, Sgt. Hurlbert provided first aid until emergency medical personnel relieved him.

While Sgt. Hurlbert was handling the first vehicle, Sgt. Burkhart went to the second vehicle where he observed three teenage girls inside, all bloodied and crying, and heavy smoke billowing from under the hood. He instructed the girls to move toward the driver side to exit the vehicle. As he got closer, he saw a fourth occupant, another girl, lying against the right rear door, across the back seat with her legs tangled underneath her. The girl had suffered serious trauma to her head and face and Sgt. Burkhart could find no signs of life. He quickly retrieved his automated external defibrillator, attached it to the victim, and activated the device. The girl began breathing, but knowing her injuries were too severe to risk moving her, Sgt. Burkhart instructed Mr. Yoder to monitor the defibrillator, and then turned to retrieve his fire extinguisher. It was then he noticed the two other passengers had been unable to exit the vehicle because

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of their injuries. Sgt. Burkhart helped both girls move away from the vehicle, and then worked to put out the engine fire. With the fire controlled, Sgt. Burkhart and Mr. Yoder continued to monitor and provide aid to the remaining victim until emergency medical personnel relieved them.

As Tpr. Shore arrived on the scene, he encountered Sgt. Hurlbert, who was providing aid to one of the crash victims. Sgt. Hurlbert reported a dog was still trapped in the victim's car. Tpr. Shore quickly obtained some gloves, approached the burning vehicle, and reached in to find an extremely frightened, barking and growling dog that bit him numerous times as he attempted to rescue it from the vehicle. Tpr. Shore got hold of the dog and carried it away from the fire, calming it as he held it tightly against his chest. He quickly left the dog in the care of a bystander, and then retrieved his fire extinguisher. After fighting back the flames as best he could, Tpr. Shore helped move the injured driver farther away from the still dangerous fire. During this incident, the batteries in Sgt. Burkharts radio went dead and he was unable to communicate with other troopers on the scene or the dispatch center. Tpr. Shore worked between both scenes conveying information between the sergeants and the dispatch center.

The wrong-way driver was later revealed to be a 51 year-old repeat OVI offender who thought she was in Columbus.

Sgt. Hurlbert joined the Patrol as a cadet dispatcher at the Mt. Gilead Post in April 1997. He began training as a member of the 131<sup>st</sup> Academy Class a year later and earned his commission in October 1998 and was assigned to the Bucyrus Post. In June 1999 he transferred to the Mt. Gilead Post, where he was named Post Trooper of the Year in 2004 and 2006 and District Trooper of the Year in 2006. He earned the Criminal Patrol Award in 2003, 2004 and 2005 and was awarded the Ace Award for excellence in auto larceny enforcement in 2006. In August 2007 he was promoted to the rank of sergeant and transferred to the Wilmington Post to serve as an assistant post commander. In August 2008 he transferred back to the Mt. Gilead Post. Born in Texas, Sgt. Hurlbert was raised in Mt. Vernon and currently resides in Sunbury with his wife, Laura.

Sgt. Burkhart joined the Patrol in June 1999 as a member of the 134<sup>th</sup> Academy Class. He earned his commission in December of that year and was assigned to the Mansfield Post where in 2003 and 2004 he earned the Criminal Patrol Award for excellence in felony apprehensions and cases. In 2005 he was named both Post and District Trooper of the Year and earned the Ace Award for excellence in auto larceny enforcement. In March 2007 he transferred to the Mt. Gilead Post. In September 2008 he was promoted to the rank of sergeant and transferred to the Patrol's Training Academy. In January 2010 he transferred back to the Mt. Gilead Post to serve as an assistant post commander. Sgt. Burkhart earned an Associate of Arts degree in sociology in 1995 and a Bachelor of Arts degree in criminology in 1999 from The Ohio State University. Originally of Mansfield, he currently resides in Galion with his five children.

Tpr. Shore joined the Patrol in June 2005 as a member of the 145<sup>th</sup> Academy Class. He earned his commission in January 2006 and was assigned to the Mt. Gilead Post. He earned his Bachelor of Business Administration in 2006 from The Ohio State University. In 2009 Tpr. Shore earned the Ace Award for excellence in auto larceny enforcement. He currently resides in Marion with his wife, Jill.

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