



NPDF
NATIONAL POLICE DEFENSE FOUNDATION



COPS AND KIDS!

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE DEFENSE FOUNDATION'S 2019 AWARDS DINNER



2019 Scholarship Award Winners

There was a time in America, within the memory of this reporter, when the American workplace was very different than today. During that bygone era, the average American husband worked a full-time job outside of his home. The average American wife worked a full-time job inside her home. Since then, the rising costs of living, real estate, the proliferation of fast-food restaurants, combined with the technology of computers, the Internet, and cell phones have radically changed the life of the average American Worker today. But at what cost?

Consider the case of Angela and Joe Occhipinti, whom, a quarter of a Century ago began to organize the NPDF that would provide support services for America's Law Enforcement community. Once the Foundation was in full operation, assisted by not one but two websites, Angela and Joe found that they both were working more than a full-time job; the responsibilities they took on had morphed into an "all-time job," 24/7. There are over 750,000 Law Enforcement Officers nationwide on the local, State, and Federal level. Many of these Workers do not have a Union to protect their rights. To this day, on a daily basis, Angela and Joe take numerous phone calls from this large pool of Workers, respond to their numerous email inquiries. The advance of technology has not reduced their work load; instead, it has increased it.

The names of those who seek their help have changed over the decades, but their stories are always the same; a Worker has been shot, injured on the job, falsely sued, wrongfully terminated or denied Promotion, discriminated against, or falsely accused of a crime they did not commit, up to and including First Degree murder. This is the workload the Foundation's numerous volunteers accept as they fight for America's Cops.

The NPDF's volunteers also fight for America's kids. One such original program, Operation: Kids was instituted as a child-safety venue. This program offered free fingerprint kits to parents to assist law enforcement in the case of a child becoming missing. This program expanded dramatically in 1999, when Joe was approached at a law enforcement expo at the Jacob Javits' Center by a distressed immigrant from Ecuador, Dr. Norma Otero, whose newborn Grand-daughter was dying of a congenital heart ailment. The woman's firstborn daughter had earlier died

from that same ailment. Otero had heard of the Police Foundation's program Operation: Kids, but mistakenly believed that this program provided life-saving operations to children who would otherwise die.

The immigrant begged Joe to save her Grand-daughter's life. Occhipinti had spent his previous career as the most Decorated Federal Agent in American history as an INS Agent, now termed ICE, serving America's immigrant communities who were being increasingly victimized by drug cartels. Accepting the challenge presented to them, Joe and Foundation President Jack Holder, a decorated retired NYPD Detective then flew down to Ecuador and cut through the Bureaucratic red tape in order to quickly bring "Baby Emily" Mendoza to New York. Through the non-profit Gift of Life Foundation, Baby Emily received her heart operation just 3 days before Christmas at St. Francis Heart Center Hospital in Roslyn, New York.

After her recovery, Baby Emily, her mother and Grand-mother, and members of the Police Foundation appeared on the CBS Early Show hosted by Al Roker. Afterwards, Baby Emily and her entourage were taken on a shopping spree at Bloomingdale's.

The success of Baby Emily's life-saving operation further expanded the scope of Operation: Kids. The original agenda of the program, in addition to the child fingerprint kits, was the offering of rewards for missing and kidnapped children in the United States; funding youth events and programs; providing financial assistance to child crime victims; providing scholarships to members and their immediate family; and the funding of "Project: Pedophile," which offers a \$1,000 U. S. Savings Bond to any child who brings information to law enforcement which results in the Federal arrest and conviction of any pedophile soliciting victims on the Internet.

Angela and Joe Occhipinti now suddenly found themselves thrust into a new role on the inter-national stage; that of Humanitarians. To date, the Operation: Kids program of the Police Foundation has taken on the task of assisting the health-care needs of 57 children from countries around the Globe. One such intervention brought Joe and Angela to an audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican. The Police Foundation is assisted in its identification of candidates for this humanitarian program through the work of the Foundation's Official Delegates in the Dominican Republic, China, Israel, Japan, Italy, Peru, Aruba, Ecuador, Malaysia, and Germany.

Assisting in these successes were the following members of the Police Foundation's Executive Board:

President-Emeritus Jack Holder, a retired NYPD Detective who took on the Gambino Mafia Family, as revealed in his new book "The Long Road to Gold," currently available at Amazon Books;

Vice-President Philip Scala, a retired FBI Agent who also worked in bringing down the Gambino Mafia Family;

Detective Joseph Walker of the Hudson County Prosecutor's Office;

Secretary Norma Delgado, now retired as a Commanding Officer of the New York City Department of Corrections.

This Legacy of protecting "Cops and Kids" was the backdrop for the Foundation's Annual Awards Dinner held this month at Russo's on the Bay in Howard Beach, New York. Receiving the Operation: Kids Humanitarian Award was former New York Governor David Paterson. Joe had contacted the Governor last year on behalf of an 11-year-old girl who needed cancer treatment not available in her native Dominican Republic. The only remaining obstacle to overcome was securing a Medical Center that would provide the cancer treatments for free. Governor Paterson then contacted the CEO of Montefiore Medical Center, which then agreed to provide the treatments for the child. Young Elizabeth now has a chance at life that she previously did not have.

In accepting the award, the Governor recalled his early encounter with the law enforcement community when he himself was a child. One day Paterson's 7-year-old brother was run over by a truck and a responding New York Police Officer was credited with saving his life. The Officer would later visit Paterson's brother and family on several occasions as the kid fought back to reclaim a normal life. That's what cops do for kids. They're not on the clock when they do so; for them, being a cop is more than a full-time job.



Former New York Governor David Paterson

David Paterson himself overcame adversity in his youth when an infection rendered him legally blind. When the Governor approached the Podium to accept his award that night, he was assisted by another in climbing up the few steps to the stage that he could not easily see. When he later exited the stage, Paterson was faced with a choice; he could descend the few steps downward with assistance from another, or he could simply jump down onto the floor he could more accurately see. Ever a problem solver, Governor Paterson jumped down from the Podium to a perfect, and Independent, landing on both feet.

In accepting his award, Paterson was given the largest ovation of the evening by stating that if he were Governor in recent years he would not have Commuted the prison sentence of Judith Clark, a member of the Weather Underground domestic terrorist organization. In October, 1981, Clark and 3 fellow Underground members, including Kathy Boudin joined 6 members of the Black Liberation Army in a robbery of a Brink's armored truck in Nanuet, New York. A Brink's guard and 2 Police Officers, Edward O'Grady and Waverly Brown, were murdered. This brought the number of Police Officers known to have been executed by the BLA nationwide to 13.

Although sentenced to 75 years to Life in prison, Clark's sentence was Commuted in 2016 by Paterson's successor. Clark was released from prison 9 days after Governor Paterson's acceptance of his Humanitarian Award. Clark's accomplice Kathy Boudin served 22 years in prison before being Paroled. Boudin is now a Professor at Columbia University in New York.

Also receiving an Operation: Kids Humanitarian Award was Francesca Tenconi, the Founder and Director of the Children's Skin Disease Foundation. At the age of 11, Francesca was diagnosed with a rare skin disease that impaired 85 percent of her skin. For 5 years Tenconi endured various treatments, some experimental, as she fought for her very life. At age 16, Tenconi established her Foundation and in 2001 established "Camp Wonder," which gives 100 kids with similar afflictions the opportunity to enjoy a Summer camp experience while also becoming aware that they are not alone in their fight for a normal life.



Francesca Tenconi, the Founder and Director of the Children's Skin Disease Foundation

In keeping with its tradition of supporting “Cops and Kids,” the Police Foundation this year honored an 11-year-old kid from Century, Florida, Tyler Carach. Tyler received the “Citizen of the Year Award” for his program that embraced rather than refuted a stereotypical cliché of Police Officers; the perception that cops love donuts.

It's true: Cops do love donuts. Cops rationalize their intake of such foodstuffs by noting that at any given moment they may be called upon to exert their physical strength to protect the public safety. This includes encountering criminals who sometimes possess super-human strength due to their influence of drugs, most notably “bath salts,” cocaine, and anabolic steroids. Coffee and donuts give Cops that extra burst of energy they may need to save lives, including their own.

In 2016, young Tyler approached 4 Cops in a store, asking them if he could buy them donuts with his own money. The Cops accepted Tyler's offer, and thus he embarked on a new hobby. Tyler's program is titled: “I Donut – need a reason to THANK a Cop!”

In this day and age of advanced technology, including Social Media and the Internet, Tyler's program proliferated nationwide. Tyler's program has now distributed over 75,000 donuts to Police Officers in 41 of America's 50 States. It's likely Tyler will get around to those remaining 9 States before he attends High School. After that, some lucky Police Academy in one of those 50 States will likely accept the “Donut Boy” as one of their recruits.

Receiving the Police Foundation's “Lifetime Achievement Award” was Joseph Reznick, Deputy Commissioner for Internal Affairs for the NYPD. In accepting his award, Commissioner Reznick revealed that in the law enforcement profession, there is no “Elevator” that quickly transports a member to the top of their field; instead, one must take the stairs, one step at a time.

Reznick, along with Joe Occhipinti, played a key role in the investigation of the murder of Police Officer Michael Buczek, murdered in Washington Heights on October 18, 1988 at age 24 by illegal alien drug dealers. Today, the Michael J. Buczek Foundation oversees a Little League baseball program in Washington Heights in Buczek's name.

Craig McGraw received the Foundation's “Distinguished Member Award,” the National Sales Director for Trans-American Trucking Company. McGraw graduated with a Degree in Criminal Justice from Seton Hall University in 2005. Each year McGraw mentors students through the “Business and Civic Engagement Boot Camp” program of Seton Hall, which focuses on the methods revealed in his Forbes Magazine article “15 Tips to Ace Job Interviews.” McGraw also serves on the Board of Directors of “Team Walker,” founded by Seton Hall Basketball legend Jerry Walker, which offers athletic programs to inner-city kids in New Jersey. McGraw also serves on the Board of Directors for the YMCA program “Occupy the Block,” which facilitates interaction between members of law enforcement and the members of the communities they serve. The Police Foundation is also an active supporter of this program.

The “Person of the Year” award was presented to Chief Paul Cell, President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the world's largest such organization which operates in more than 150 countries. Chief Cell has oversight of the IACP's National Security Policy Council, comprised of the Homeland Security Committee, Terrorism Committee, and the Intelligence Coordinating Panel. Cell's 39-year career in law enforcement has included work as Chief of Police of the Montclair State University Police Department. His role in Academia includes being the co-author of the textbook “Creating Comprehensive Sexual Assault Response Teams.”

The “President's Award” was presented to Patrick P. O'Carroll, Executive Director of the Federal Law Enforcement Officer's Association, which represents over 26,000 members from over 60 separate Agencies. O'Carroll's career in law enforcement began as an Agent of the United States Secret Service, for which he served for 26 years. For 12 years, O'Carroll served as Inspector General of the Social Security Administration.

As usual, this year's event was sold-out, with extra tables added in the adjoining hallway in order to accommodate those in attendance. One crowd favorite during the DJ portion of the program afterwards was NYPD School Safety Officer Olga Ritter, who exhibited some impressive dance moves. Ritter attended along with members of her organization the Russian-American Officer's Association, which was formed in 2003. Most members work for the NYPD and are of Russian descent.

Also in attendance were representatives of Liu Wei, the Chairman of the China Security & Protection Group Company, who is the Police Foundation's Delegate to China.

Opening the evening was the New York City Police Emerald Society Pipe and Drum Band. The Presentation of Colors were presented by the Port Authority Police of New York and New Jersey and the New York City Police Department. The Invocation was presented by Monsignor Robert Romano, Deputy Chief Chaplain of the NYPD. The Closing Prayer was offered by Rabbi Harry Berkowitz, Chief Chaplain of the MTA Police.

It should also be noted that, in addition to supporting “Cops and Kids,” the Leadership of the National Police Defense Foundation have always maintained strong relations with the second half of “The Finest; the Bravest;” America's Firefighters. Among the Foundation's Coalitions is the Firefighters and EMS Foundation, represented by Vincent Tummino, a retiree of the New York City Fire Department.

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