



City of Burnsville, Minnesota POLICE DEPARTMENT

100 Civic Center Parkway
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337
952-895-4600 • Fax 952-895-4640

Robert T. Hawkins
Chief of Police

03/09/2010 @ 0900 hrs
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ATTN: NEWS DIRECTOR

Public Information Officer Contact:

Sergeant Jef Behnken
952-895-4631

Cell: 952-292-6563

jef.behnken@ci.burnsville.mn.us

BURNSVILLE POLICE ANNOUNCE 2009 OFFICER OF THE YEAR

A valued member of the Burnsville Police Department since 2002, **Officer Paul J. Oelrich** has performed to an unusually high standard throughout his law enforcement career. Serving in the capacities of Patrol Officer, Traffic Officer, and Emergency Action Group-Tactical Team Member, Officer Oelrich is highly respected among his peers and has set himself apart from others through his consistent, tenacious work ethic and leadership skills.

Distinguished as Burnsville's 2009 Officer of the Year, Officer Oelrich has a proven track record of exceptional service and dedication to the department and to the citizens of Burnsville. Whether aggressively patrolling the streets or responding to a high-risk tactical team callout, Officer Oelrich is a consummate professional who resolves the issue at hand and looks for the long-term solution to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. His positive attitude and passion to develop relationships in the community are displayed daily, and his honesty and integrity is above reproach.

Simply speaking, Officer Oelrich loves his job and as a result he is very pro-active on the streets. Through his self-initiated contacts, Paul leads the Patrol Unit in DUI arrests and moving citations, places second in total number of traffic stops, and ranks sixth in custodial arrests during 2009.

Equally impressive are Officer Oelrich's efforts while working numerous Dakota County Traffic Safety Projects over the past three years. Paul brought attention to the topic of the dangers of conducting traffic stops in 2008. During a Safe and Sober enforcement detail in Dakota County on July 11, 2008, at 2252 hours, Officer Oelrich stopped a car for a traffic violation. While standing alongside the subject's vehicle, an intoxicated driver crossed onto the shoulder of the road and struck the stopped vehicle at a very high rate of speed. Both vehicles were severely damaged by the collision and Officer Oelrich was knocked to the ground by the force of the impact, sending him tumbling into the ditch. After regaining his wits, Paul was able to run to

his squad, grab his first-aid bag, and began administering first aid to the victims at the scene. Video of the crash was obtained by a camera mounted to the dash of Officer Oelrich's squad car.

As a result of this incident, the Burnsville Police Department held a press conference calling attention to the high number of police officers being struck by inattentive drivers. During the media event, the squad video of the DUI crash showing Officer Oelrich being thrown to the ground was released to depict what police officers have experienced when drivers don't pay attention behind the wheel. A plea was issued for all drivers to be more attentive and to abide by Minnesota's "move over law" when they see stopped emergency vehicles.

This important safety message was not only carried by local newspapers and television stations in the Twin Cities area but also received national attention. Officer Oelrich made a guest appearance on *NBC's Today Show* and *MSNBC News*, in New York City, to share his experience and to narrate the video of the harrowing crash. The incident was also aired on *TruTV's Most Daring-Disaster on the Job* (Episode 304). Although this was a very traumatic event for Officer Oelrich, he was not swayed in his pursuit of intoxicated drivers, speed enforcement, and Foss Law violators.

As an Emergency Action Group-Tactical Team Member, Officer Oelrich was able to utilize his specialized training, knowledge, and expertise at the 2008 Republican National Convention, in St. Paul. Serving as a part of the South Metro Mobile Field Force, Paul had dedicated numerous hours training for the event, learned new techniques in crowd and riot control, and worked exhaustive hours during the convention. Throughout the week, their tactical unit faced numerous groups and individuals who had one specific purpose in mind—to damage property and disrupt the event without regard for the safety of others. In the end, "12 Bravo-Unit 1" gained a reputation of professionalism and being able to "hold the line".

Officer Oelrich leads by example with his positive influence and high-level of enthusiasm for the job at hand. On January 23, 2009, Paul assisted other officers in responding to the report of an Aggravated Robbery involving three suspects with weapons. Upon arrival, Officer Oelrich quickly located and apprehended one of the suspects; a loaded handgun was later located on the ground where the suspect was taken into custody.

On December 10, 2009, while on routine patrol, Officer Oelrich initiated a traffic stop and began the process of identifying all of the occupants of the vehicle. During the normal course of the stop, Officer Oelrich was alert and steadfast, observing obscure indicators which led him to believe that criminal activity may have taken place. Through further discovery, Paul eventually arrested three of the five occupants of the vehicle and seized two handguns, one of which was stolen. Search warrants were also obtained in order to take DNA samples from the suspects to build a stronger case for prosecution.

Officer Oelrich's devotion to law enforcement and the community he serves are well in keeping with the highest standards of this department. Through his efforts, many criminals have been taken off the streets and many drivers have been educated regarding Minnesota's Foss Law and the dangers of conducting traffic stops. His tenacious work ethic and willingness to get

involved have been a tremendous influence on those he works with. Congratulations, Paul, for being selected as Burnsville Police Department's 2009 Officer of the Year!



**Burnsville Police Department
2009 Officer of the Year**

Paul J. Oelrich

###