

2017

Patrolman James Neal
Patrolman Bryan Keough

Grand River Police Department

There are many situations which law enforcement officers deal with on a daily basis which challenge their abilities and which put them under tremendous scrutiny. Two of those which have become hot button issues are dealing with illegal immigrants and with the mentally ill. For these two Grand River officers, both of those issues combined during an incident on July 8th, 2017.

Grand River Police Chief Barry Dodd reported that Officer Neal and Keough were working in the area of Pickle Bill's Restaurant near its boat dock, when they encountered a mentally ill, illegal Mexican immigrant. The male was arrested and handcuffed. Suddenly, he broke free of the officers and jumped into the river, quickly disappearing under the water.

Officer Neal quickly removed his duty gear and entered the river to save the male. Upon locating him, the male began to struggle and allowed his dead weight to pull both Neal and himself deeper into the water. Neal kept trying to gain the subject's compliance, while working to keep his own head above water. During this time, the handcuffs broke open, and the male was now able to begin swimming out into the river. Neal caught up to him, and the struggle continued with the subject again trying to drag him under water.

Officer Keough had now also entered the river, and assisted Neal in dragging the subject back toward the dock. As they began to try and remove him from the water, he made one last attempt to drag Neal under water by using his legs to place a leg lock on Neal. Neal was able to raise his head out of the water and make Keough and another passerby know that the subject had trapped his legs. They were able to get him to release Neal, whereupon the male was removed from the water, and the arrest was completed.

Due to the quick thinking and bravery of these officers, this male was saved from a possible suicide attempt, and prevented from drowning or seriously injuring Officer Neal. Although the outcome of this case as it relates to the subject was not documented, it demonstrates the dangers that our first responders face as they try to handle the myriad of societal issues that are thrown their way.

After reviewing all of these facts, the Blue Coats Award Committee deemed their actions worthy of the Jorge Medina Distinguished Service Award.