

2000

Sergeant Carl Dondorfer
Deputy Mark Pannell

Lake County Sheriff's Department

Lake County Sheriff Chief Deputy William E. Crosier nominated Sergeant Carl Dondorfer and Deputy Mark Pannell for the Jorge Medina Distinguished Service Award for their actions in saving a suicidal male. On a day when someone has chosen to die, it is often the bravery of our police officers that give them another chance at life.

Pannell had been dispatched to a call of a depressed, distraught male in Perry Township. Dondorfer responded as his back up. They found a male sitting in his truck and holding a weapon. As other deputies established a perimeter around the scene, Dondorfer tried to get the man to put down his gun. He responded that he would not put it down and that he was going to kill himself.

Dondorfer slowly approached the truck with Pannell providing cover. They worked their way up to the driver's window. They could now see that the male had his shirt unbuttoned and was holding a cocked .45 caliber automatic pistol to his chest. The gun was in his right hand, and his thumb was in the trigger guard. He told the officers that the gun was loaded.

For nearly an hour, the deputies kept talking to the male, pleading with him to put down the weapon, and talking about other alternatives available to him. However, it was becoming evident that nothing was working.

Dondorfer decided to try to end the situation by forcing the gun away from the male. He created a brief distraction, and quickly reached through the open window and grabbed the slide of the gun. With his other hand he placed a finger between the hammer and firing pin to keep it from discharging. After a short struggle, he was able to pull the gun away from the male.

Crosier stated that Dondorfer and Pannell "have shown bravery and heroism far beyond the call of duty." Both received their awards on February 21, 2001, at the Mentor Harbor Yachting Club.

Mark Pannell passed away on June 21, 2003. He was 37 years of age. Carl Dondorfer has entered local politics as a trustee for Concord Township. In 2021, he also accepted an appointment as the Chief of Police in Waite Hill.