

2020

Patrolman Ben Bruno
Sergeant Mark Guerrieri

Willowick Police Department

Most people don't understand what it's like for a police officer to get ready for his tour of duty. You need to mentally prepare for your shift. Get in the right mindset, and forget any issues from your personal life. Then you check your equipment and suit up. One of the most important items that you put on is a ballistic vest. Every day you put on that hot and bulky piece of equipment. It reminds you that it is possible that today's the day that someone may try to harm you. People just don't understand that concept.

On October 2, 2021, Patrolman Bruno and Sergeant Guerrieri had both the right mindset and the right equipment as they went on patrol. At about 5:40pm, they were advised of a vehicle being operated erratically. Willowick and Eastlake officers soon located the vehicle and attempted to stop it. The driver refused to stop and at the intersection of Bayridge and Willowick Dr, struck another vehicle causing it to overturn. The Eastlake officer stopped to assist the victim. Continuing to try to evade officers at high speeds, the driver finally stopped on Daniel Drive.

Guerrieri and Bruno immediately began giving verbal commands to the driver. However, he produced a handgun and began firing striking Bruno's ballistic vest in the chest area. Both officers returned fire and struck the driver several times, seriously injuring him and ending the threat. The officers and a third officer then began performing life saving measures, including using a tourniquet, which prevented the death of the subject.

The officers were nominated for the award by Chief Brian Turner. Bruno stated that when a situation like this occurs, "you don't have the time or luxury to strategize and plan, you just have to react, and I am thankful for the outcome." Guerrieri was honored that they were recognized and expressed his gratitude to his family, supporters, department, and the Blue Coats.

In a first for the Blue Coats, due to the Covid pandemic, these officers received their award and recognition in a virtual meeting conducted via Zoom. They were subsequently introduced and recognized at the 2022 meeting and awards dinner.