

2015

Patrolman Thomas Novak

Fairport Harbor Police Department

In the history of the Lake County Blue Coats, only two men have received the honor of being awarded the Jorge Medina Distinguished Service Award, twice. Sheriff Daniel Dunlap received it in 1977 and 1985, and Fire Chief Al Zwegat was honored in 1996 and 2001. That distinction was to be further shared in 2015, as Patrolman Thomas Novak received his second award. To disprove the adage that "lightning never strikes twice," Novak received his award for actions which took place in consecutive years. The odds of such an event cannot be calculated, considering the daily events which transpire in the lives of our safety forces in Lake County, Ohio.

As it was, on October 14, 2015, Novak was dispatched, along with the Fairport Harbor Fire Department to a structure fire in an apartment building. Novak was first on scene, and found heavy fire in one of the apartments. He learned that an occupant was still inside. In spite of the heavy smoke and flames, he forced open the locked door, and located the resident just inside the front door. He was able to drag the unconscious male out to safety.

Suffering effects of smoke inhalation, he remained on scene, assisting the fire department, until ordered to go to the hospital for treatment.

The victim was found to have burns of 30% of his body, and but for the quick actions of Novak, faced certain death. He faced a long period of hospitalization.

In another first, Novak was equipped with a body cam, which recorded his heroics. The dramatic recording was submitted with the letter of nomination from Chief Mark Kish, and was widely viewed on local media and shared on the internet. After viewing the video, there is little doubt that Novak was a worthy recipient for the 2015 Jorge Medina Distinguished Service Award.