

Trooper honored for doing his part

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The arm that helps hold up the law has also learned that it's important to give something back.

Which is why Michigan State Police Trooper and Farmington resident John Jackson has been named "Peace Officer of the Year" by the Fraternal Order of Police despite not being a member of the statewide organization.

No state police trooper was on the selection committee, which reviews applications from 800 law enforcement agencies.

That fact wasn't lost on the person who called Jackson to inform him of the honor.

"He said, congratulations again. That makes it all the more deserving," said Jackson, recalling the conversation.

In Jackson's case, actions speak louder than affiliations.

Those he's been lauded for include his running waist-deep into a swamp — despite suffering a heart attack three years before — to save a man who was drowning and severely injured after crashing his car off I-696 near Middlebelt that night in October.

A few months prior, Jackson chased and captured a prisoner on foot who had escaped custody at the 47th District Court in Farmington.

But some of his biggest demons Jackson's confronted have been his own.

Jackson, a recovering alcoholic for nine years, spent several hours telling about his battle with the disease during a video recording last year.

He was interviewed along with enlisted and retired officers for a production on law enforcement and alcoholism. The torrent of emotions the interviews produced led some to wonder if the tape would ever see it to a VCR.

Brighton Hospital is using the video as part of its treatment program. It's a story that needed to be told, he said.

"I thought it might open some

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Trooper John Jackson
—Peace Officer of the Year

eyes," said Jackson, 53, who is a 25-year veteran. "It might let some people know there are some resources available."

That wasn't the case when Jackson realized he had a drinking problem.

Jackson and others lobbied for an employee assistance program, which has been started by the Michigan State Police's Behavioral Science Division. Troopers and their family members can receive help dealing with substance abuse.

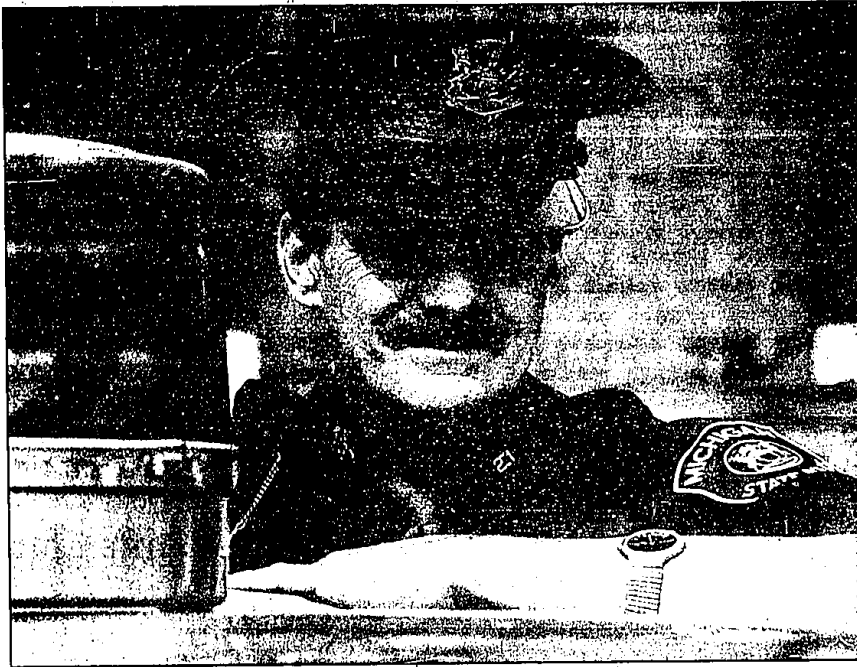
"I look at my situation as being a fortunate individual," Jackson said. "I didn't have to go that route where others have gone, the Black and Blue division where they and their families have been hurt."

He works out of the state police Northville Post, where he was also named "Trooper of the Year" in April. He's also served in Romeo, Detroit, Traverse City, L'Anse, and Petoskey since joining in 1971.

He remembers working at a gas station on Detroit's east side — where he grew up — when a little boy came in sobbing after thieves had stolen his bike. The gas station owner phoned police.

A few minutes later, a blue state police cruiser pulled up and two troopers stepped out. The troopers took the boy and returned to the gas station 45 minutes later with a bike strapped on top. The boy was in the front seat smiling with a lollipop.

"That sold me," Jackson said.



STAFF PHOTO BY BRADLEY LEMKE

Peace prize: Farmington resident and Michigan State Police trooper John Jackson did his share in 1995, saving a life, capturing an escaped prisoner and telling about his personal battles with alcoholism to help other officers.

"A young man seeing that ... I was a goner."

Jackson received the "Peace Officer of the Year" award during a ceremony at the FOP state convention in June.

He donated \$500 to the Michigan Law Enforcement Memorial

Foundation, which is trying to establish a memorial to police officers who have been killed on duty.

His duties include patrolling this area's freeways, which includes writing tickets and

helping stranded motorists change a flat tire.

Or, in Jackson's case, not sparing a second thought to jump into a swamp to save the life of an accident victim.

"Just because of my age and my heart attack, I've never wanted to be thought of, 'Oh boy He's got 25 years in; he can't keep up or whatever,'" Jackson said. "I've just wanted to go out and pull my own weight."

Getting acquainted: David Chomet, a newly-hired physical education teacher at O.E. Duncel Middle School, listens to Superintendent Bob Maxfield talk about the district.

STAFF PHOTO BY BRADLEY LEMKE



New teachers get chalk talk in preparation for school year

School doesn't begin until Aug. 27, but 60 some new teachers are preparing for their first day.

Farmington Public Schools conducted an intensive, three-day orientation program for new hires.

Retirements and leaves have led to a third-year of high turnover at the district.

"By and large, it's retirements," said Larry Lobert, director of Personnel. "You have to

remember a lot of these folks came into the profession around the baby boom time."

Superintendent Bob Maxfield welcomed the new crew at the Farmington Training Center Tuesday. He provided an overview and shared his vision for the district.

Incoming teachers also got a glimpse of the area's history through a video.

People from the district's bilingual, gifted and special education programs gave presentations on the services they provide.

And, of course, members of the Personnel Department made sure all the proper forms had been filled out.

Many of the new teachers have worked in other districts; Some are straight out of college.

Plan for a 'Sober October'

Farmington Families in Action (FFIA) is planning a month of activities promoting awareness and education in substance abuse with a new name, Sober October.

"When people see red ribbons all over Farmington during October, the name Sober October easily explains what this campaign is all about," said Patti Frederick, committee chair.

Each October FFIA sponsors a red ribbon campaign as well as other activities to prevent substance abuse and promote a drug-free community.

The month begins with a Community Breakfast Oct. 1 at 7:15 a.m. at Glen Oaks featuring nationally renowned speaker and "edu-tainer" Kevin Wanser who was a hit at the parent and student GRIP workshop last winter.

Some other events this year include a Big Boy Celebrity Server Night fund raiser and a video for

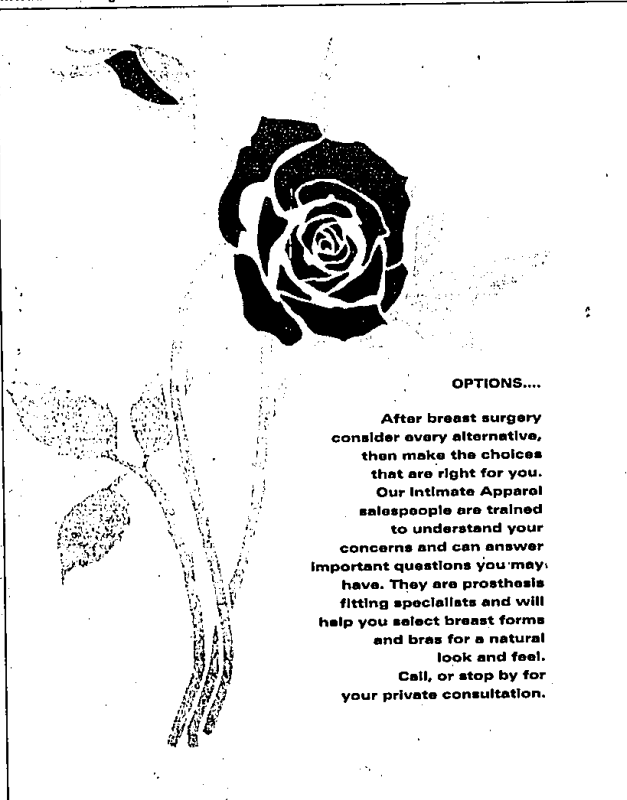
parents of middle school students which will be cable cast on TV-10 and INFO TV-12.

Students will also get involved by tying a gigantic red ribbon around the high schools' press boxes.

Another FFIA sponsored program, TWYKAA (Talking With Your Kids About Alcohol) will kick off in October. This year's parenting program is offered four consecutive mornings or evenings beginning in October. Call Linda Enberg to register, 476-2303.

"We are a community that is doing something to control the problem," said Frederick, "and FFIA has been at the forefront for 12 years. We can make a difference if the community works together to become aware and involved with our youth."

Call Farmington Families in Action at 471-5993 for more information, to get your red ribbon or to sign up for any of these activities.



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