

CAPITAL 29 APRIL 2008 (8)

County 100 Club honors unsung heroes at banquet

By MARC SHAPIRO
Staff Writer

When there's an accident anywhere in Maryland, state police often call in Trooper John Bedell.

An expert in accident investigation, he heads out from the Glen Burnie barracks to investigate fatal accidents and other serious crashes wherever he is needed.

Finding the subject interesting early in his career, Trooper Bedell has become an expert by paying for his own training, taking classes on his own time, and spending his own money on the equipment needed to answer the riddles he finds.

For his dedication, the Anne Arundel County 100 Club last night honored Trooper Bedell with its annual Al Brandt Unsung Hero Award, named after the club's founder.

"I don't really look for recognition for the things I do," he said. "I do it because I love it, but things like this make me love it even more."

The 10 nominees this year included officers

from every public safety department that operates in Anne Arundel County, including county police and the Sheriff's Department, the Annapolis Police Department, Natural Resources Police, Maryland Transportation Authority Police, state police and county and local fire departments.

County Firefighter Doug Wilson said he considers it an honor to be nominated.

"It just gives you the recognition the public doesn't always see," he said.

The firefighter of 35 years, who will retire in August, spent 22 years in fire investigation, investigated more than 500 fire scenes in Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia and Delaware, many with his black lab, Iris.

"My whole career has been really rewarding," he said. "It's all about helping people and serving the community."

The 100 Club's mission can be easily explained by club President Charles W. Shaef-fer Jr.

(See 100 CLUB, Page B3)



By Andy Carruthers — The Capital
A mixed honor guard from the county Sheriff's Department, Police and Fire departments, participates during the 8th Annual Fundraiser Banquet yesterday for the 100 Club of Anne Arundel County.

100 CLUB

(Continued from Page B1)

While families of public safety officers in Anne Arundel County get benefits when their loved ones are killed in the line of duty, help from organizations like the 100 Club is still welcome.

"They do get benefits, but sometimes it takes a while to get the benefits," Mr. Shaeffer said. "If they're young, there often aren't enough benefits."

So the 100 Club steps in to provide supplemental benefits to these families. There were no families faced with the tragedy of accepting the help this year. Last night's eighth annual fundraiser banquet at Michael's Eighth Avenue in Glen Burnie, drew a crowd of 375 people and raised \$25,000.

In addition to raising money for the club, the night served as a forum to honor firefighters, law enforcement officers and emergency medical service personnel — the unsung heroes of public safety.

In addition to the Al Brant award, the group also handed out the Duke G. Aaron Scholarship Award. It is named after the only public safety officer to die in Anne Arundel since the club's 1999 inception.

Last night, it was given to

UNSUNG HERO AWARD NOMINEES

Nominees for this year's Al Brant Unsung Hero Award, presented by Anne Arundel County 100 Club:

- Trooper James Wilcox, state police Annapolis barracks.
- Firefighter Jack Hulete, Ferndale Volunteer Fire Department.
- Lt. Ennis Czorapinski, county Sheriff's Department.
- Trooper John Bedell, state police Glen Burnie Barracks.
- Cpl. Gregory Certeza, state Natural Resources Police.
- Firefighter Doug Wilson, county Fire Department.
- Detective Jennifer Long, county Police Department.
- Firefighter John D. Muhitch, Annapolis Fire Department.
- Police Communication Officer Celeste Medley, Annapolis Police Department.
- Transportation Communications Officer Irene Guerin, Maryland Transportation Authority Police.

Firefighter Daniel Phillips of the Woodland Beach Volunteer Fire Department for pursuing public safety studies.

Firefighter Phillips, who wanted to be a firefighter since childhood, joined the fire department in 2005, completing the 100 hours of course work needed to qualify as a Firefighter I, before the year was done.

He has since completed more advanced firefighting classes, rescue classes and emergency medical technician classes. He is enrolled in the paramedic program at Anne Arundel County Community College.

"It's like a dream job," he said. "It's very rewarding to help other people."

The banquet's silent auction raised \$6,200, said Rich Dobry,

chairman of the auction and a member of the 100 Club's board of directors.

The 59 auctioned items included a flatscreen television, restaurant gift certificates, a kayak, Baltimore Orioles game tickets and artwork.

Special guests included Kendel Ehrlich, wife of former Governor Robert L. Ehrlich Jr.

She spoke of the importance of first responders and why she and her husband frequently attend events such as this when people tell them they don't have to.

"People say we don't need to go to these events," she said. "We do it because we want to do it."

mshapiro@mdgazette.com