



Mascotte Police Officer James Festa

Since joining the Mascotte Police Department Officer James Festa has shown a dedication not only to the Department, but to the position that he holds. He has shown that he is willing to take that extra step to not only complete his assignments but to excel at them. He has also taken on extra duties that take up a considerable amount of his off duty time. Not only does he perform his normal 12 hour shift as a patrol officer, but he has taken on the responsibility of overseeing the startup of our Police Athletic League participation to help keep our community's youth off the streets and involved in wholesome athletic activities.

Officer Festa's dedication was proven by his actions during an incident in June of 2007 that proved he is willing to go above and beyond his normal duties. For several years the city of Mascotte had a homeless resident named Clark Yobst who could be seen all over town at all hours of the day and night. Officer Festa began helping him with repairs on his bicycle. Clark would collect cans from the closed businesses around town and he was the unofficial handyman for one of the local gas stations. During his many contacts with Clark, Officer Festa struck up a rapport with him and would look out for him.

Without the knowledge of anyone at the Police Department Officer Festa began looking into Clark's past in an attempt to locate his family and ended up finding the family in Pittsburg Pennsylvania. Officer Festa found that Clark had only contacted his family once in the past 20 years.

Officer Festa contacted Clark's sister by phone and put Clark in touch with her. Clark's sister contacted Officer Festa and sent him money for bus fare back to Pennsylvania, but a discussion of Clark's mental state proved that this would not guarantee Clark's return to Pennsylvania. They also considered air fare but with Clark not having proper photo identification this idea was also rejected.

Officer Festa then decided the most reliable way of getting Clark home would be to drive him there himself. The preparations for the trip included getting Clark, who had been homeless for over 20 years presentable to his family with a haircut and shower and new clothing. A rental car for the trip was also needed. Officer Festa spent almost \$300 of his own money on this trip.

Officer Festa began the trip and he and his wife left with Clark on June 8, 2007. On June 9, 2007 Officer Festa reunited Clark with his family in a very emotional meeting. Officer Festa returned to Mascotte with most of the Department still unaware of what he had done. He stated to the City Council when he was honored at a Council meeting, that a factor in his decision to drive Clark home was his desire to set an example for his children of caring for others.

Officer Festa still checks on Clark to see how he is doing and as of last check Clark was still living with his family, he was no longer drinking and was looking for work.

Officer Festa's selfless act of compassion to an area homeless man set the highest example of humanity. This act transcended his position as a Police Officer. Officer James Festa received several awards in May of 2008:

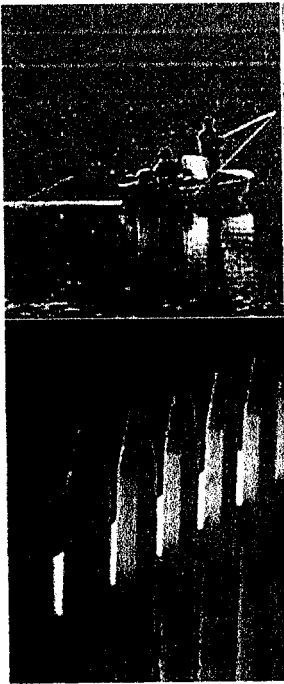
Officer James Festa was recently awarded the Leesburg Rotary "Service Above Self" award for the "Lake County Law Enforcement Officer of the Year".

Officer James Festa also was recently awarded the "Paul Harris" award medallion. This award is a very special award that includes a \$1,000 donation in Officer Festa's name to the Paul Harris Foundation.

City of Mascotte Mayor and Council

City Manager Marge Strausbaugh

Police Chief Allen



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Mascotte Police Department News



Festa receiving award from Chief Allen

- In May of this year Officer James Festa was recognized by the Leesburg Rotary Club as the Lake County Law Enforcement Officer of the year. This Prestigious award is one of the highest awards given to Lake County Law Enforcement Officers. James received the award in recognition of his selfless acts involving reuniting a homeless man with his family in Pennsylvania. The Rotary club in conjunction with the Leesburg Police Department has given this award yearly since 1982. Officer Festa is the first Mascotte Police Officer to win the Officer of the Year and we are very proud of him. In addition to the Officer of the Year Award the Rotary club realized that Jim's actions also exemplified the qualities and goals of their organization and awarded him with a Paul Harris fellowship which is the highest honor in their organization.

- Earlier this year Chief Allen recognized that the Police Department was lacking the services of a Criminal Investigator to perform the follow up and Investigative work that up until that time was being performed by the Road Patrol Officers. Due to that need Officer Richard Dillon was promoted to Detective and now performs most of the investigative work required by the Department. Rick has started the job and quickly proved himself to be a capable investigator by closing a number of cases with arrests and property recoveries.

- The Mascotte Police Department would also like to recognize Corporal Rolando Banasco on his graduation from Keiser University with Bachelors Degree in Criminal Justice. The Department recognizes the time and dedication that it takes to have a full time job and continue with your studies. Officer Banasco is to be commended.

Canine Team: