Deputies honored for work on homicide case

Iron County Sheriff Deputies, from left, Ryan Boehmke and Wade Cross, received recognition for their work on investigating and convicting David Levack for the murder of county resident Joyce Johnson. Sheriff Mark Valesano presented them with Distinguished Service awards. Lt. Greg Cunningham of the Michigan State Police Dickinson County Post and Iron County Prosecuting Attorney Melissa Powell also presented service awards at the Iron County Board of Commissioners' Aug. 28 meeting.

CRYSTAL FALLS—Two Iron County Sheriff deputies received Distinguished Service awards for their work on the investigation and conviction in a homicide case in Iron County in September 2011.

Deputies Wade Cross and Ryan Boehmke received the awards from Sheriff Mark Valesano during the Iron County Board of Commissioners' Aug. 28 meeting.

They also received recognition from the Michigan State Police and the Iron County Prosecutor's office.

"In 2011, our Sheriff's Department took on the huge responsibility of investigating a homicide," said Valesano.

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"Today we are recognizing two of our own deputies who went above and beyond the call of duty, with the dedication, persistence and commitment displayed during the Joyce Johnson homicide investigation and prosecution."

Cross, said Valesano, took on the role of lead investigator, working long shifts, "determined to find Joyce's killer.

"Those shifts were filled with following leads, conducting search warrants and doing interviews."

Additionally, Cross was commended for leading a multijurisdictional team that included officers from Dickinson County and the Michigan State Police.

"On Nov. 1, 2011, after a very professional, thorough and exhaustive investigation," said Valesano, "David Levack was arrested and charged with premeditated homicide, felony homicide, home invasion and witness intimidation."

Following the arrest, officer continued to piece together evidence.

Cross was commended particularly for conducting an investigation into Levack's phone records, which included tracking down cell phone locations to pinpoint both the time and place of a call made to Johnson the night of her murder.

"That evidence ultimately became a cornerstone to our case, and to the conviction of Levack on all charges.

"It was a conviction that ironically occurred on a very special day, that being what would have been Joyce's 82nd birthday," Valesano said.

Boehmke, Valesano, similarly "entered the investigation with an all-in attitude, providing excellent interviewing and communication skills.

"Your commitment and work ethic were an example to all."

Cunningham commended the deputies for the excellence working as a team with other agencies, including the state police, in the arrest of Levack, putting themselves at risk, and subsequently bringing in the suspect without harm to either himself or any other personnel.

Iron County Prosecuting Attorney Melissa Powell said it was due to the investigative efforts of the deputies, a "circumstantial case" was successfully prosecuted. Particularly, she said, was the investigation of the cell phone records placing Levack in the vicinity of the last call made to Johnson.

Powell asked that letters of commendation from her department be placed in both deputies files.