



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Wheat Ridge Cops Receive Recognition From Alzheimer's Association

Wheat Ridge, Colorado ~ On Monday April 28, at the Wheat Ridge City Council meeting, two Wheat Ridge Police Officers will be recognized by the Alzheimer's Association of Colorado for their compassionate response to an emergency call.

“One of the goals of the Wheat Ridge Police Department is to provide training for our officers that prepares the officers for the many issues and challenges they face when encountering people with emotional and mental health related issues, including Alzheimer’s, dementia and autism. Wheat Ridge is a community comprised of a high elderly population, so Dementia, specifically the most common form, Alzheimer's disease, is a primary training focus for the department.” stated Daniel Brennan, Wheat Ridge Police Chief.

On the night of March 4th, two Wheat Ridge Police Officers handled a call that the Alzheimer’s Association deemed worthy of recognition. Officer Nellie Gisonda and Officer John Parsons were able to identify and assist two elderly women in what could have been a very dangerous and potentially fatal incident. Officer Gisonda was dispatched to a call at 1:30 in the morning where she found a 77 year old woman lost and confused. The woman was improperly dressed for the cold night and Officer Gisonda was able to identify the woman as suffering from some form of dementia. The woman remembered her address in Lakewood, but Officer Gisonda quickly determined that the woman hadn’t lived there for several years. With the help of Officer Parsons, Officer Gisonda was able to discover the location of the woman’s home in Wheat Ridge.

While Officer Parsons attempted to contact the woman’s caretaker, he heard screams of “Help me, help me” coming from a nearby park. The screams were coming from the caretaker,

another elderly woman, who was lying on a picnic table with a semi-automatic handgun and a suicide note. Officer Parsons was able to disarm and calm the woman, saving her life. The caretaker was actually so distraught with the disappearance of her friend and the many years of being the sole caretaker of a dementia patient that she was actually planning to take her own life. With assistance from Adult Protection Services, the woman with dementia was placed in a care facility and her caretaker was provided with the mental treatment and support that she desperately needed.

“We credit the Colorado Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association for the support they show to us, all law enforcement, and the community at large,” continued Chief Brennan. “They were providing five consecutive weeks of In-Service Training to us at no cost during the time this incident occurred.”

"Wheat Ridge Police Officers Parsons and Gisonda displayed exceptional compassion when responding to a recent wandering report," stated Linda Mitchell, Alzheimer's Association of Colorado President and CEO. "They not only helped a very confused, upset older woman find her way home, they worked to find a safe place for her when they discovered her caregiver was extremely upset and in need of help herself. With more than 70% of those with Alzheimer's living in our communities, it's critical that our first responders know what symptoms to look for and effective ways to respond. These two officers not only responded well to the situation but they exhibited a special sensitivity and care that reflects well on the police department under which they serve. At tonight's Wheat Ridge City Council meeting, we recognize their service with certificates of appreciation."

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*“Exceptional People Providing Exceptional Service”
Wheat Ridge Police*