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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IPAC Announces 2022 Award Winners

Indiana's prosecutors celebrate accomplishments of lawmakers, fellow prosecutors and other public servants

(INDIANAPOLIS – Dec. 13, 2022) – The Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council honored several people during its Winter Conference Awards Ceremony this past week, including victim advocates, law enforcement officers, investigators, legislators and outgoing prosecutors. Overall, 14 individuals were celebrated and recognized during the ceremony for their long, successful careers or outstanding accomplishments during 2022.

Chris Naylor, IPAC Executive Director, mentioned that there were an incredible number of deserving nominees this year which led to multiple winners in multiple categories. The highlights of the evening were the Powell – Feller and the Stephen J. Johnson awards. The Powell – Feller award is the highest award handed out by the Association of Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys, Inc. and has been given out to prosecutors, judges, attorneys general and governors over the years. This year, the award was given to Dustin Houchin, the longtime Washington County Prosecutor who was recently elected judge in Washington County. Houchin was intimately involved with IPAC during his tenure as prosecutor, serving on the IPAC Board of Directors, chairing the Legislative Committee and working as faculty at several IPAC trainings and conferences.



Powell – Feller Award winner Dustin Houchin (right) with Daviess County Prosecutor Dan Murrie.

“Keep fighting the good fight,” Houchin told the room of over 200 people. “Keep fighting for justice.”



Monroe County Prosecutor Erika Oliphant (left) with Stephen Johnson award winner David Gohn



Lee Buckingham (right) accepts his Stephen Johnson award from Daviess County Prosecutor Dan Murrie

The Stephen J. Johnson award, named after former IPAC Executive Director Stephen Johnson, is given to Indiana prosecutors who have provided exemplary service during their career. IPAC handed out two Johnson Awards this year to recognize two different prosecutors who are leaving the arena. The first winner was former Monroe County Deputy Prosecutor David Gohn, who just recently retired from prosecution after 32 years of service. His boss, Monroe County Prosecutor Erika Oliphant said her office was already feeling the void left by Gohn.

Outgoing Hamilton County Prosecutor Lee Buckingham was also awarded with a Johnson Award at the ceremony. Buckingham has been the Hamilton County Prosecutor since 2011 and was a Deputy Prosecutor prior to that. He is also very involved with IPAC boards and trainings.

“This is an extremely high honor for me,” Buckingham said after receiving the award. “Steve Johnson was a great man and a great lawyer and its humbling to be get this award that bears his name.”



The Legislative Award Winners (left to right) Rep. Wendy McNamara, Sen. Michael Crider and Rep. Sharon Negele.

The IPAC Board of Directors also handed out four Legislative Excellence Awards for 2022. The winners were Representative Sharon Negele, R-Attica, Representative Wendy McNamara, R-Evansville, Senator Mike Bohacek, R-Michiana Shores, and Senator Mike Crider, R-Greenfield. The four lawmakers were all selected for their work on legislation during the 2022

session that helped rape and human trafficking victims, as well as child sexual abuse survivors.

IPAC has two different awards for law enforcement officers in Indiana. One for officers who showed exemplary service during the calendar year and one for officers or investigators who have shown a dedication to law enforcement for the entirety of their career. IPAC handed out two Law Enforcement Officer of the Year awards this year. One to Detective Andrew Rushing from the Monroe County Sheriff's Department and one to Officer Tyler McKeon of the Anderson Police Department. Rushing was instrumental in helping investigate a very awful child murder case in Monroe County. His nominator, Erika Oliphant of Monroe County, said he went above and beyond to bring justice to that case. McKeon was credited with saving a woman's life when he arrived on the scene of a car crash this year and applied a life-saving tourniquet to her arm, saving her from fatal injuries.

(Top photo)
Officer Tyler
McKeon (middle)
and Madison
County Chief
Deputy Andrew
Hanna (left) and
Madison County
Prosecutor
Rodney
Cummings



(Bottom photo)
Detective
Andrew Rushing
(right) and
Monroe County
Prosecutor Erika
Oliphant



The second law enforcement award is the Law Enforcement Distinguished Service Award, created to celebrate law enforcement officers who have had lengthy careers working with prosecutor offices. Two of these awards were handed out this year as well. Madison County Prosecutor Rodney Cummings nominated and introduced outgoing Madison County Sheriff Scott Mellinger for his long and successful career. Cummings praised Mellinger for having the right personality and leadership skills for his profession. Then, Posey County Prosecutor Thomas Clowers gave the award to Kenny Rose, a long-time investigator in his office who has reached 'legendary' status in his county.

(Bottom left photo) Posey County Prosecutor Thomas Clowers (left) and investigator Kenny Rose. (Bottom right photo) Madison County Sheriff Scott Mellinger (center) with Madison County Prosecutor Rodney Cummings (right) and Chief Deputy Andrew Hanna (left)



The awards ceremony also honored office staff workers in prosecutor offices who have shown exemplary dedication to public safety. As IPAC Executive Director Chris Naylor told the crowd, “without the crucial office staff who handle the day to day operations of the office, prosecutors would be unable to do their jobs.”



(Left photo) Franklin County Prosecutor Chris Heurkamp (left) and Phyllis Schwegman.

(Right photo) IPAC's Ann Gramling (left) with IPAC Sr. Counsel Dave Powell

Two office administrators were recognized for their long service. Phyllis Schwegman from the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office and Ann Gramling, an IPAC staffer, were both given IPAC's Kathy Falkner Richey Award for outstanding service as office staff. Gramling, who is retiring after 25 years at IPAC, will also have her name added to the Falkner Richey Award in the future.

And Madison County's Director of Victim Resources, Betsy Baxter, was honored as the 2022 Victim Advocate of the Year. Baxter was lauded for her help with victims in the Madison County office as they try to navigate the oftentimes complex criminal justice realm.

The 2022 Victims' Advocate of the Year Betsy Baxter (right) and Madison County Chief Deputy Prosecutor Andrew Hanna



“The IPAC awards ceremony is a chance for us to say ‘thank you’ to prosecutors, staff and others who have been allies for prosecutors over the years,” Chris Naylor said. “All of these winners deserve their moment in the spotlight for all of their hard work.”

About the Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council: The IPAC is a non-partisan, independent state judicial branch agency that supports Indiana's 91 prosecuting attorneys and their chief deputies. It is governed by a 10-member board of directors of elected prosecuting attorneys. The IPAC assists prosecuting attorneys in the preparation of manuals, legal research and training seminars. It serves as a liaison to local, state, and federal agencies, study commissions, and community groups in an effort to support law enforcement and promote the fair administration of justice.

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