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Department honors Firefighter of the Year

Two additional employees recognized for their efforts

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The Shelby Township Fire Department on March 15 honored two firefighters and a battalion chief for going above and beyond in the line of duty, and awarded one of the honorees – Firefighter Robert Muylaert – with the distinc-

tion of being named the 2015 Firefighter of the Year.

“Trying to choose someone (for Firefighter of the Year) is very difficult when everything we do is a team effort,” Fire Chief Jim Swinkowski said. “But every so often there’s someone who, usually behind the scenes, is trying to find ways to improve the services that we provide in Shelby Township.”

At the March 15 meeting, Swinkowski said Muylaert approached him last summer about implementing a new program called DOSE (Direct On Scene Educa-

tion), which he had learned about through the Michigan Department of Community Health.

“The goal of the (DOSE) program is an innovative attempt at eliminating sleep-related infant death due to suffocation, strangulation or positional asphyxia by using first responders to identify and remove hazards while delivering education on scene,” Swinkowski said. “We have used this program several times already and received a big ‘thank you’ from the families.”

As an example of the effective-

Firefighter

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ness of the program, Swinkowski noted that the fire department had recently responded to a 911 call and upon entering the home the firefighters noticed a small infant was living there. After transporting the (adult) patient to the hospital, the first responders returned to the home, talked to the infant's mother, and performed a safety check.

"They noticed some small stuffed animals in the crib, went through the safe sleep checklist with the mother and removed the items," Swinkowski said. "They also (checked) all the smoke detectors in the home and found two with dead batteries. They replaced the batteries and tested the detectors to make sure they were working. The mother was very grateful for the information and education that we provided."

For his efforts to bring the program to the department's attention, Muylaert was nominated by his peers for the 2015 Firefighter of the Year Award.

"Not only did Rob do the research on his own before he brought it to me, he was also able to reach out to Meijer (at Hall and Hayes roads) to secure donations so we could equip our trucks with pack 'n' plays, smoke detectors and spare batteries so that we have them on hand," Swinkowski said. "He also secured a second donation from the Michigan Schools and Government Credit Union to help us maintain this program going forward."

According to Swinkowski, the Shelby Township Fire Department is the second de-

partment in Macomb County to participate in the program.

"It's been very successful," he said. "We have a lot of families out there who are thankful that we provided this information to them. So on behalf of the Board of Trustees and the Shelby Township Fire Department, I'm very proud to present (Muylaert) with the 2015 Firefighter of the Year Award."

Also recognized during the March 15 ceremony were Firefighter Jeffrey Shea and Battalion Chief Michael Gaydos.

"(Shea) was awarded the Macomb County Fire Chiefs Association's Medal of Valor



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHELBY TOWNSHIP

Shelby Township Firefighter Robert Muylaert (left) was honored as the 2015 Firefighter of the Year on March 14. Also recognized were Battalion Chief Michael Gaydos and Firefighter Jeffrey Shea.

on March 4 for his off-duty actions during a one-car accident in May 2015 at Stony Creek Metropark in which three teenagers lost their lives," Swinkowski said. "What he did that day was recognized by a lot of chiefs

throughout the county."

Gaydos, a 25-year veteran of the Shelby Township Fire Department, was recognized for being selected as the 2015 Firefighter of the Year by the Macomb County Fire Chiefs Association. The award was presented to Gaydos on March 4.

"Mike received the award for his outstanding leadership and dedication to the betterment of Macomb County in hazardous materials response and planning," Swinkowski said.

According to Swinkowski, Gaydos played an instrumental role in the formation of the Macomb County Hazard-

ous Materials Team in 2011.

"His expertise in this field and his work in southeastern Michigan and at the state level with out-of-county resource planning has made him one of the most respected and leading voices on Hazmat response," Swinkowski said. "He was one of the few instrumental people who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make a county team a reality."

Prior to joining the Shelby Township Fire Department in 1991, Gaydos served four years in the U.S. Air Force and continued serving as a reserve member until his retirement in 2007.



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