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**THE SCIENCE GUY  
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# Firefighters get awards for leadership, valor

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SHELBY TOWNSHIP — Three Shelby Township firefighters received awards this month for accomplishments in 2015.

The Macomb County Fire Chiefs Association honored two on March 4, and Shelby Township Fire Chief Jim Swinkowski honored one at the March 15 township Board of Trustees meeting.

The Macomb County Fire Chiefs Association presented a Medal of Valor to probationary firefighter Jeff Shea for his actions on May 8, 2015 — the day of the triple-fatal, single-vehicle crash at Stony Creek Metropark.

Shea said he and some friends were hanging out at Stony Creek Metropark on May 8, the last day of his orientation with the Shelby Township Fire Department, near the scene of the crash.

"We heard this screeching, horrifying sound, and we turned about and saw something that we never thought we'd see in our lives," Shea said. "We jumped in the truck and flew over there."

Upon arrival, he said, he discovered one of the two survivors of the crash belted in the car in no immediate danger. Because he noticed signs of possible head injury, he said he chose to not move him.

The other survivor, Shea said, was trapped beneath the vehicle in the spillway.

"We actually pulled him from the water," he said. "If we hadn't been there to get him out of the water, he probably would have drowned."

Swinkowski said he and two other fire chiefs in Macomb County nominated Shea for the Medal of Valor award as soon as the nominations opened.

"I was contacted right away to make sure he was brought up, because what he did that day was recognized by a lot of chiefs throughout the county," Swinkowski said.

The Macomb County Fire Chiefs Association recently honored Michael Gaydos, a battalion chief set to retire at the end of the month after 25 years with the Shelby Township Fire Department, as



Photo by Sarah Wojcik

From left, Battalion Chief Michael Gaydos, firefighter Robert Muylaert and firefighter Jeff Shea stand in the lobby of the Shelby Township municipal building March 15. All three received awards this month.

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# Awards

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the 2015 Macomb County Firefighter of the Year for his role in launching and leading the county's multijurisdictional hazardous materials team.

"Anyone knows trying to get an entity to agree on things can be difficult, but we got 26 different entities to try to agree on this," Swinkowski said.

Swinkowski also presented the 2015 Shelby Township Firefighter of the Year award to Robert Muylaert for introducing a new program called DOSE — Direct On-Scene Education.

"(The 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 from an infant's sleep space while on scene during emergency and nonemergency 911 calls," Swinkowski said. "It's a nationwide program, and we're only the second department in Macomb County to be actively doing this."

Swinkowski said firefighters also check for working smoke detectors and provide families with "pack and play" kits to ensure safe sleeping areas.

"Sometimes you come across bad situations and don't have the tools or the ability to coach people," Muylaert said. "I went to some conferences, and they had this program out there that taught you how to approach people in their own homes."

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