



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

Wednesday, Sept. 14, 2011

Contact: Scott Dadson, Beaufort City Manager, 843-525-7070

Beaufort firefighter, police investigator named tops in their fields by Exchange Club of Beaufort

A Beaufort firefighter and police investigator earned top honors from the Exchange Club of Beaufort.

Beaufort Firefighter Ross Vezin is the Exchange Club of Beaufort's Firefighter of the Year and Beaufort Police Investigator George Erdel is the 2011 Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

"This is an exceptional honor and we are proud to have both these fine public servants working in the City of Beaufort," Beaufort City Manager Scott Dadson said.

"It was so appropriate that the Exchange Club of Beaufort presented these awards during the 9-11 ceremonies Sunday in the Waterfront Park," Dadson said. "At a time when our nation remembered the great sacrifices of first responders during that tragedy, we also got a chance to celebrate the continuing good works of our police and fire departments."

Vezin joined the City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department in June 2008 as a recent graduate from the Palm Beach Community College Fire Academy and a Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technician. Through aggressive training from the South Carolina Fire Academy on his part, he was promoted through the firefighter ranks quickly and recently earned a "meritorious" promotion to Firefighter III earlier than scheduled.

He is also a 2011 graduate of both the Technical College of the Lowcountry and Columbia Southern University with an Associate's Degree in Fire Service Management and an Associate's Degree in Fire Science. Vezin expects to complete his Bachelor's degree in Fire Science from Columbia Southern University in 2012.

In 2010, Vezin served as a counselor at the MUSC Burned Children's Fund Camp Can Do. He also was instrumental in accomplishing a "Stuff the Stocking" drive for CAPA during the 2010 holiday season. The Beaufort/Port Royal firefighters donated money with which Vezin bought stocking stuffers. Then, along with his Engine Company, Vezin took Christmas dinner, stockings, and Santa Claus to the staff and residents of CAPA's Open Arms Shelter.

He also played a key role in a fairy tale Christmas story in which the firefighters on duty before Christmas Eve learned that a family in the Beaufort community had nothing for Christmas. By noon on Christmas day, with Vezin's help, that family had a Christmas tree, presents for five children including bicycles for each. This collaborative effort of firefighters was spearheaded by Vezin and his Engine Company.

Beaufort Police Investigator George Erdel joined the Beaufort Police Department in August of 2006 after an enlistment in the United States Marine Corp where he was a military policeman. He has been assigned to the investigations unit at the Beaufort Police Department since March of 2009.

During his time assigned to investigations, Erdel has been assigned 110 cases of which 108 were Group A offenses – major crimes. He has cleared or closed 96% of those cases assigned. Of those cleared or closed, 36 were cleared by arrest, four were exceptionally cleared, 10 were classified as unfounded and 54 were administratively closed.

Investigator Erdel has taken classes in First Line Supervision, Basic Detective, Reid Technique of police interrogations, a cellular forensics class, and a class on tracking fugitives in the electronic age. He has completed 66 hours during his own time toward a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Park University.

Investigator Erdel, using his knowledge and interest in the electronic medium, has created and maintained the Beaufort Police Department's Facebook page.

He takes the lead in cases concerning stolen computers and other technology crimes. His interaction with those in the computer networking field has led to multiple recoveries of stolen computers particularly for the Beaufort County School District and The Technical College of the Lowcountry.

In addition to his criminal investigations, he is an evidence custodian, and a marijuana analyzer.

END