



Ft. Pierce Police Department News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

R. Sean Baldwin

Chief of Police

920 S. U.S. #1

Ft. Pierce, FL 34950

Fort Pierce Detective wins Outstanding Service to Victims Award

FORT PIERCE – Fort Pierce Police Detective Zoila Simmons has never been at a loss for words. There is a first time for everything and that occurred today when her name was announced as the 2008 Outstanding Service to Victims Award recipient.

As last year's recipient Dori Fowler described a violent rape case and the level of care and concern Detective Simmons displayed toward the victim in that case, Detective Simmons was attempting to gather her composure after listening to the heart wrenching, tear jerking life story of Debbie Parnham. Parnham, who forgave the suspect who killed her son in a 1992 drive-by shooting, was the featured speaker for the 19th Judicial Circuit Victims' Rights Coalition annual luncheon in recognition of National Crime Victim's Rights Week.

"It took me by surprise," said Detective Simmons. "I can always think of something to say, but this just caught me off guard. All I could think of to say was "thank you"."

Her simple expression of gratitude was good enough for the audience gathered for the annual luncheon, which was attended by representatives from various law enforcement agencies and the justice systems in Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee counties.

"I am very proud of Detective Simmons and I was confident that she would win," said Chief R. Sean Baldwin. "This is just one example of her commitment to her work and protecting the community we serve. "

Terry Owen Port St. Lucie Police Department Victim's Advocate and the coalition's president said the award is given annually to recognize an individual who through his/her dedication and commitment has provided outstanding service to crime victims in Indian River, Martin, St. Lucie, and/or Okeechobee County and made a lasting contribution to help further the cause of Victim's Rights in the 19th Judicial Circuit of Florida.

"We are so honored to have had such a great turnout and successful event," Owen said. "We hope that we brought more awareness to victims' issues while honoring victim advocates in the field."

The other 2008 nominees were: Assistant State Attorney Linda Craft, Port St. Lucie Police Department Sergeant Rick Schichtel, Assistant State Attorney David Lustgarten and Martin County Sheriff's Office Victim Assistance Coordinator Barbara Rockwell.

Previous winners of the award include: Judge Katherine Nelson (2006) and Indian River County Sheriff's Office Victim Assistance Coordinator Judy Deeson (2005). In addition Harriette Hill-Rowe, the Victim Witness Services Director for the State Attorney's Office, was recognized in 2005 for being the first to bring victim's advocacy to the 19th Judicial Circuit.

Audria V. Moore
Public Information Officer

Cell: 772-370-1848
Fax: 772-465-5181

Office: 772-461-3820 ext. 5203
Email: fppio@fppd.org