



April 25, 2016
For immediate release

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Batavia detective named by Illinois chiefs' association 'Most Outstanding Officer of the Year'

SPRINGFIELD – Detective Kevin Bretz of the Batavia Police Department was honored Friday, April 22, as Illinois' Most Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer by the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police. Bretz received the award during the association's Annual Awards Banquet in Schaumburg. He was nominated for the award by Batavia Police Chief Gary Schira.

“It is fitting that tonight we are honoring someone who has served his community with distinction for 28 years,” said ILACP President Frank Kaminski, the Park Ridge police chief. “Bretz has been doing what is called community policing his entire career.”

The award is called the James J. Wade Most Outstanding Officer of the Year, named after the Tinley Park police chief who died of a heart attack while serving as chief in 1994. “We don't give this award every year, but the Awards Committee reviewed Chief Schira's nomination and determined Bretz to be most deserving,” said Ed Wojcicki, ILACP executive director.

“I'm beaming with pride that Detective Kevin Bretz has been chosen,” Schira said when he heard the news. “All the members of the Batavia Police Department rely extensively on Kevin's expertise and leadership, continually seeking his counsel and advice. His contributions to the success of our department are immeasurable. Because I knew Chief James Wade and the true professional he was, for Detective Bretz to win the award named after Wade makes it that much more special.”

Following are the comments made by President Kaminski in presenting the award on April 22:

“Bretz is the Crime Free Housing Coordinator in Batavia, covering 849 housing units. Detective Bretz knows the landlords, all of them, as well as the property managers in the program. He constantly interacts with them, and with great communication and cooperation, he is constantly improving police and community relations.

“Detective Bretz has gone above and beyond in this role, developing outstanding trusting and cooperative relationships with all those landlords. The program is successful, and Batavia is safer, because of his exemplary efforts.

“Bretz is also one of Batavia’s Lead Homicide Investigators (state certified) and has handled multiple homicides with successful prosecutions.

“He was the Batavia Police Officer of the Year in 2004 and 2011, and he won our Illinois Law Enforcement Medal of Valor in 1996 and the Life Saving Award in 1997.”

Schira adds that Bretz gives feedback to landlords about police incidents on their property and assists in the expeditious evictions of problem tenants. This mutual public/private partnership has resulted in a substantial reduction of police calls for service at these properties and an improved quality of life.

According to Schira’s nomination of Bretz for the award, Bretz has taken it upon himself to lead neighborhood alert/watch programs in which he plans, organizes and meets with various citizens to discuss crime prevention strategies within the community. In addition, Bretz has opened lines of communication with local senior assisted living centers, providing educational presentations to the elderly in regards to how to avoid becoming a victim of common scams.

Bretz also actively serves as a Squad Leader managing 11 other officers for ILEAS (Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System), is an investigator with the Kane County Major Crimes Task Force, and is the Batavia Police Department’s Public Information Officer.

He has received 24 Letter of Recognition, 30 Letters of Appreciation, and four Letters of Commendation. He also has been an instructor at the Suburban Law Enforcement Academy at the College of DuPage.