



# HUGO

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2026



## RECOGNIZING TRUE EXCELLENCE

A correctional officer who prevented an inmate's self-harm. A deputy on an unrelated call who came upon a person lying unconscious on a cold sidewalk and stopped to help. A team that investigated a complicated sex-trafficking case that led to successful prosecution. These are just a few examples of the truly outstanding work honored at the annual Washington County Sheriff's Office Employee Recognition Ceremony on Jan. 29.

This year's ceremony featured eight Lifesaving Awards, with 25 recipients that included deputies, telecommunicators, correctional officers and a public citizen; two Exceptional Service Awards, presented to the Sex Trafficking Team and the Investigations Unit; a Unit Citation to the 14 members of the Courts Division; and three Meritorious Service Awards.

While all these individuals and teams deserve recognition, limited space means only highlighting the exceptional work of the Investigations Unit, along with a detective from the Coordinated Response Team and a K9 deputy. Using teamwork, quick thinking and fast action, WCSO detectives and the FBI were able to track down two brothers from Texas who had come to Minnesota in September 2025, held a family hostage at gunpoint and kidnapped one of them in a targeted attempt to steal \$8 million in cryptocurrency. The quick and excellent federal-county collaboration in this case was essential to the filing of federal charges.

Through their excellence and dedication, all of these award-winners are inspirational examples of what it means to serve the community. To learn more about these awards, please check out the [WCSO Facebook page](#).

NUMBER OF INCIDENTS

322

TRAFFIC STOPS

194

CITATIONS

43

# WC26002459 MISSING PERSON

12XXX HOMESTEAD DRIVE N

Shortly before 4am on Jan. 15, deputies arrived at a residence where a husband was reporting that his wife was missing. The husband told deputies he had awoken around 2am when his wife got up, but he had fallen back asleep right away. Upon awakening again around 3:30am, the husband noticed she wasn't back in the bedroom. After searching the entire residence and not finding his wife, the husband called 911. The husband noted that her cell phone was still at the home and her car was still in the driveway. Deputies entered the wife as a missing person in NCIC. Several deputies began searching the area around the home in the 6-degree weather, and a State Patrol plane was enlisted to search for a heat signature. After about an hour of searching, deputies found the wife under the roof of an outbuilding several houses north of her residence. They brought her back home and requested an ambulance, but the wife declined any medical evaluation, and she was removed from the missing persons database.

## MESSAGE FROM THE SHERIFF

As Sheriff, I get pulled in many directions throughout each day, so I rely on my team of professionals to be where I can't. On the streets, that's our dedicated deputies. In the office, it's our top-notch administrative team. We have two recent additions to that team that I'd like to introduce.

The first is Courtney Schroeder, who filled the role of Executive Assistant to the County Sheriff in late summer 2025. Courtney has been an invaluable asset to Washington County, starting in 2016 as a telecommunicator in the Emergency Communications Response Center and then joining the Records Division in 2022. Courtney keeps track of my schedule, keeps the office organized, helps manage community engagement (such as Shop with a Cop at holidays) and internal events (such as the recent recognition awards), and assists community members reaching out to the Sheriff's Office through emails and phone calls. She is also a driving force behind the Pink Patch Project, which has raised \$7,563 for the American Cancer Society. You may reach her at [Courtney.Schroeder@washingtontcountymn.gov](mailto:Courtney.Schroeder@washingtontcountymn.gov).

Next, toward the end of 2025, Pafoua Lo came on board as Public Information Officer. Pafoua was a reporter for KSTP-TV before joining the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office communications team. Here at WCSO, she has quickly become instrumental in establishing good relationships with our local media outlets, connecting with the public through engaging social media posts, and developing new strategies for promoting the Sheriff's Office mission of providing top-quality public safety services. She has already created several informative and entertaining videos! In addition to supporting my office and direct staff, Pafoua is available to collaborate in partnership with the cities and townships we serve to meet their communications needs. You may reach her at [Pafoua.Lo@washingtontcountymn.gov](mailto:Pafoua.Lo@washingtontcountymn.gov).



We at the Sheriff's Office appreciate the skills and dedication they bring, and we look forward to everything they're sure to contribute to this organization.

In service,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Dan Starry".

Sheriff Dan Starry