

Citations for 2003 Medals of Merit

To Correction Officer Mark A. Pietrzak of Wende Correctional Facility, the Medal of Merit:

You were at your home on January 11, 2002, when your neighbor Noelle Marcucci rushed to your house. She told you her house was on fire and she needed your help. You and your wife were cool-headed enough to call 911 and seek assistance before heading next door.

Flames and heavy smoke prevented you from entering the second-floor bedroom where 15-month-old Maressa Marcucci was in her crib. You and your wife instead helped Ms. Marcucci rescue her two other children and removed them from the house. You then raced back home, grabbed your portable air unit, and returned to the blazing house.

Wearing the air unit, you went up the stairs to the second floor. In almost complete darkness, you crawled in the direction of the baby's screams. You lifted Maressa from her crib, brought her downstairs and out of the building. You held your oxygen mask to her face until relieved by the rescuers that you had summoned. Maressa was released from a local hospital following treatment for smoke inhalation.

Absent your quick and professional actions, the flames or the smoke would most certainly have claimed Maressa's life and, quite possibly, those of her two siblings.

Your selfless actions reflect great credit not only upon you, but the entire Department as well.

Date of birth: 12/14/58

Employment date: 11/30/81

Salary: \$50,312

To Mr. James T. Whitehead, formerly of Lakeview Correctional Facility, the Medal of Merit:

On April 7, 2002, you were a Correction Officer riding to work in a van along with two of your fellow Correction Officers: Larry Eggleston and Christopher Loder.

The van collided head-on with another vehicle and overturned.

Despite your own injuries, you knew from the smell of gasoline that you might have only seconds to act. You then pulled Officers Eggleston and Loder – both more seriously injured than you – from the wreckage.

Minutes later, the van erupted in flames.

You risked that inferno in order to rescue your injured friends and colleagues. The injuries you sustained in that incident contributed to your departure from this Department.

If not for your actions, Correction Officers Eggleston and Loder might not have survived the crash.

Your actions reflect great credit not only upon you, but the entire Department as well.

Date of birth: 1/25/57

Employment date: 12/15/86