



COBB PUBLIC SAFETY HEROES HONORED AT 2025 AWARDS LUNCHEON

ATLANTA (October 6, 2025) — The Cobb Chamber honored Cobb County’s finest Monday, October 6, during its annual Public Safety Appreciation Luncheon, presented by Marquee Sponsor Superior Plumbing, and Program Sponsors Cobb EMC and MetroAtlanta Ambulance Service at the Coca-Cola Roxy. The event kicked off Public Safety Appreciation Week, a community-wide effort to say “thank you” to the men and women who work tirelessly to keep Cobb County safe.

Tim Milligan, Cobb Chamber Public Safety Chairman & Chief of the Marietta Fire Department, as well as Lance LoRusso, LoRusso Law Firm, addressed the audience to share messages of appreciation and to communicate how our community can come together to lift up our public safety year-round. Following these messages, awards were presented to public safety agencies from across Cobb County, including police, fire, sheriff’s office, campus police and EMS.

Congratulations to our 2025 Public Safety Award winners:

Public Safety Employee of the Year

This award is given to an employee who has performed his or her job with exceptional skill, exhibited leadership and critical incident management and a devotion to their responsibilities.

Field Training Officer Stephen Abernathy, Cobb County Police Department

In January 2025, Field Training Officer Stephen Abernathy demonstrated outstanding initiative and investigative skill during two major incidents in Cobb County. Following the placement of an improvised explosive device at a local bank, FTO Abernathy—though not originally assigned to the call—proactively reviewed surveillance and identified a suspect vehicle. His timely response resulted in the arrest of the suspect, who was found with additional explosive materials.

Later that month, FTO Abernathy responded to a homicide scene and again took initiative by canvassing local businesses for video footage. His efforts led to identifying a suspect and providing investigators with a critical lead that resulted in an arrest.

Beyond his investigative work, FTO Abernathy plays a vital role in mentoring the department’s next generation as a Field Training Officer. He also serves as a senior member of the Cobb County Police Honor Guard, dedicating countless hours to representing the department at funerals and ceremonies with professionalism and compassion.

FTO Abernathy exemplifies the values of hard work, integrity, and leadership, and reflects great credit to Precinct Two and the Cobb County Police Department.

Award of Merit

The Award of Merit honors a public safety professional or team whose actions go beyond the normal scope of duty to protect others, strengthen community safety, or create meaningful improvements in public safety operations.

Engine 71, Engine 72, and Truck 72 of the Austell Fire Department, Austell Fire Department

***Engine 71- Captain Brent Worsham, Firefighter John Bennett, Captain Michael Porterfield
Engine 72- Lieutenant Kam Forrister, Firefighter Adam Gravitt, Firefighter Chris Robinson
Truck 72- Battalion Chief Matt Cabrera, Firefighter David Parson***

On August 4, 2024, Austell Fire units Engine 72, Engine 71, and Truck 72 responded to an emergency call at the Norfolk Southern Railyard for a crane operator possibly in cardiac arrest—50 to 60 feet above the ground in the cab of a massive Gantry Crane. With no clear view of the patient from the ground, firefighters ascended the structure via staircase, unsure of what they would find.

Inside the cramped cab, crews located the operator unresponsive but breathing. Working nearly 60 feet in the air, Engine 72 began immediate care, administering Narcan when information suggested a possible overdose. After two doses, the patient began to respond—a critical turning point in the rescue.

With the patient stabilized, the team faced the challenge of bringing him down safely. In tight quarters, they secured him to a backboard and transferred him to Truck 72's aerial platform. Coordinating closely with ground crews, they lowered him without incident, where Puckett EMS continued care. The rescue showcased the crew's skill, coordination, and dedication in a complex, high-risk situation. Their ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, deliver critical care, and execute a safe extrication reflects the highest standards of professionalism in the fire service.

Outstanding Contribution Award

The Outstanding Community Contribution Award honors a public safety professional who demonstrates extraordinary dedication to the community through volunteerism, outreach, and civic engagement beyond their official duties.

Officer Joshua Adams, Marietta Police Department

Officer Joshua Adams is a 14-year veteran of the Marietta Police Department whose service is defined by compassion, innovation, and unwavering commitment to community. He has dedicated much of his career to mentoring youth through the Marietta Police Athletic League (PAL), serving as assistant boxing coach, mentor, lead teacher, and facilitator for the "Boys to Men" program. His leadership has transformed PAL into a trusted space where young people build discipline, self-worth, and life skills. Perhaps the most powerful testament to his impact is how students recall their first connection to PAL: "Officer Adams told me to come." His genuine care, consistent presence, and honest communication

have turned simple recruitment into meaningful outreach—and that outreach into lasting, life-changing connections.

Officer Adams also helped launch Marietta's Co-Responder Program, pairing law enforcement with behavioral health professionals to respond to mental health crises. His efforts reduced use-of-force incidents, improved follow-up care, and strengthened community trust.

Currently serving as the School Resource Officer at Marietta Middle School, he continues to model empathy, patience, and integrity in daily interactions with students. Across every role, Officer Adams is recognized as a bridge between law enforcement and the community—one who leads with heart, builds lasting relationships, and inspires change. His work has increased youth engagement, improved outcomes for families, and set a powerful example of what it means to truly serve.

Leadership & Excellence Award

The Leadership & Excellence Award recognizes a public safety professional whose exceptional leadership, vision, and sustained dedication have advanced the mission of public safety and elevated the standards of service.

Lieutenant Armando Cipriano, Powder Springs Police Department

Lieutenant Armando Cipriano is an outstanding leader whose dedication, vision, and integrity have left a lasting mark on the Powder Springs Police Department and the community it serves. Throughout his career, he has advanced officer recruitment, strengthened community partnerships, and fostered a positive, high-performing agency culture.

His innovative recruitment strategies have significantly increased the department's ability to attract and retain qualified officers, ensuring effective public safety services. A skilled leader in both routine operations and critical incidents, Lt. Cipriano is known for decisive action and unwavering fairness. His vigilance has led to life-changing outcomes, including rescuing a neglected child from a vehicle in 2024 and reuniting a lost elderly woman with her family in 2025.

Beyond operations, he mentors countless officers, promotes professional growth, and champions collaboration across agencies to address crime prevention and outreach. His ability to build trust, de-escalate tense situations, and inspire excellence has earned the respect of colleagues and citizens alike.

Lt. Cipriano's service exemplifies the highest ideals of law enforcement—leadership, compassion, and an unyielding commitment to protecting and uplifting the community.

Award of Valor

The Award of Valor is one of the highest honors in public safety, recognizing extraordinary courage in the face of imminent danger. It is reserved for individuals who, without hesitation, place themselves at great personal risk to protect others and safeguard the community.

Officer Rahim Somani, Cobb County Police Department

On December 5, 2024, Officer Rahim Somani displayed extraordinary courage and selflessness while off duty. Driving home from his shift at Precinct 4, he came upon a multi-vehicle crash on I-285. One vehicle was already engulfed in flames, and a man was trapped inside—bleeding, disoriented, and pinned beneath the dashboard.

Recognizing the urgency, Officer Somani immediately sprang into action. With flames quickly approaching the victim, he forced the vehicle door open and climbed inside. Disregarding his own safety, he worked quickly to free the man's legs. Despite the intense heat and danger, Somani remained focused. After a brief struggle, he successfully extricated the injured driver—later found to have suffered broken legs—and carried him to safety.

Moments later, the vehicle was completely consumed by fire.

Officer Somani's bravery and decisive action undoubtedly saved the man's life. His conduct reflects the highest ideals of law enforcement and public service. His heroic efforts that night serve as a powerful reminder of the selfless commitment officers make both on and off duty.

Lieutenant Hanson, Sergeant Mordaunt, Officer Smith, and Officer Trail, Smyrna Police Department

On September 25, 2024, Smyrna Police Department "D" shift responded to an audible alarm at Adventure Outdoors on South Cobb Dr. When they arrived, they found that someone had forced entry into the closed business through the southern door. Lt. Ryan Hanson, Sgt. Nick Mordaunt, and Ofc. Mike Smith quickly began assessing the situation to determine what response was necessary. While doing so, they observed a male moving inside the business near one of the gun counters.

An employee of the business soon arrived on scene and aided the tracking of the suspect by accessing the interior cameras remotely. While he did this, the officers of D shift, aided by Ofc. Dustin Trail and K9 Loki opened the north door to the business to create a communication portal with the suspect. Sgt. Mordaunt took control of the team holding the line at the door and quickly developed an immediate action plan while Lt. Hanson worked to secure additional resources.

Before any additional resources could arrive, the suspect walked out of the business and toward the officers armed with an assault rifle. Lt. Hanson, Sgt. Mordaunt, Ofc. Smith, Ofc. Trail, and K9 Loki attempted to take the suspect into custody. During this process, the suspect ceased to be compliant, pulled back from the officers, and opened fire. To protect themselves as well as the public, the officers returned fire, striking and fatally wounding the suspect. In the exchange of gunfire, Sgt. Mordaunt was struck in the leg by a bullet and Lt. Hanson was grazed.

Lt. Hanson quickly grabbed Sgt. Mordaunt and drug him to a safe location behind a nearby car while Ofc. Smith covered the doorway where the suspect had fallen. Once Sgt. Mordaunt was out of the hot zone, Ofc. Douglas Murry quickly applied a tourniquet to Sgt. Mordaunt's leg and aided in loading the sergeant into Ofc. Ciskey Copper's car to be transported to the hospital.

This harrowing event highlights the courage, discipline, and professionalism of Smyrna's "D" shift. Their decisive actions under intense pressure not only neutralized a deadly threat but protected their fellow officers and the community, embodying the highest standards of law enforcement service and sacrifice.

The 2025 Public Safety Appreciation Breakfast is sponsored by Marquee Sponsor, Superior Plumbing; Platinum Sponsors, Cobb EMC and MetroAtlanta Ambulance Service; Awards Sponsor, LoRusso Law

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For the latest information on Public Safety Appreciation Week, visit www.cobbchamber.org/publicsafety, or contact Katie Guice at kguice@cobbchamber.org.

About the Cobb Chamber

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