

Sheriff retires late detective's badge

Jerry Dale Abston

By Tracey Hackett

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PUTNAM COUNTY — The badge and patrol car number of the late Putnam County Sheriff's Detective Jerry Dale Abston were officially retired this week, and members of his family were presented a framed plaque containing his badges and gun.



That presentation occurred at an awards banquet honoring the service of all Putnam County Sheriff's deputies.

(Pictured: Abston's daughter, Morgan, and widow, Kim Abston).

"The badge and patrol car number 357 will never be used again by the Putnam County Sheriff's Department," Putnam

Sheriff Eddie Farris said, "but for a year, all patrol cars will display a decal inscribed with the number 357 to honor the life and career of our friend."

Abston, a 26-year veteran of the department, died in July following a prolonged battle with cancer.

In an emotional moment in the event's proceedings, his widow, Kim, and daughter, Morgan, accepted the framed plaque remembering their loved one's career.

Beginning as a dispatcher and rising through the ranks to eventually become a detective, Abston's career included directing the Fraternal Order of Police's "Shop with a Cop" children's Christmas charity program and teaching firearms safety as an instructor of handgun carry permit classes.

Other members of his family present at the awards ceremony included his father, former Putnam County Sheriff Jerry Abston; his mother, Lois Bertram; and his father-in-law and mother-in-law, Eddie and Linda Thompson.

Three distinguished retirees of the Sheriff's Department were also recognized and awarded plaques at the event.

They include Serena Flowers, current Baxter Police Chief Danny Holmes and Johnny Nash.

Flowers plans to retire in January with 24 years of service in both juvenile and adult corrections.

Holmes retired from the department in 2006 with 30 years of service as a deputy. He also worked with the Putnam County D.A.R.E., or Drug Abuse Resistance Education, program.

And Nash retired in 2012 with 30 years of service in corrections. For several years, he supervised an inmate work crew in the community.

The banquet was catered and served by students in Brittany Neely's culinary arts class at Cookeville High School.

The occasion also marked the unveiling of a new scholarship created in partnership by the Putnam County Sheriff's Office, Upper Cumberland Education Foundation and Nashville State Community College.

The Putnam County Sheriff's Office Rising Star Scholarship was created for qualified applicants at Nashville State Community College to possibly receive \$500 toward their field of study.

Two scholarships — one funded by Nashville State Community College and the other funded by Sheriff Farris — will be awarded annually.

The banquet culminated with the presentation of a certificate for each deputy, recognizing and honoring his or her years of service to the department.

Sheriff Farris also expressed appreciation to the family members who were present and who support the deputies in the challenging careers they have chosen, giving examples of support from his own family.

Former sheriffs were also invited to the event, and those present — in addition to the current sheriff and Abston — were Billy G. Smith and David Andrews.

"This was the first event of its kind, but we hope to make the awards banquet an annual event," Sheriff Farris said.

Farris said he thinks it is important to routinely recognize and honor the deputies' hard work, because law enforcement isn't just a career; it's also a family, and the best families support each other.

*See Jerry Dale Abston Obt. in Crest Lawn Obs. at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>