

Officers Make 'Top Cops' List

Det. Zielinski, Sgt. Fennelly Cited for Tough Work in 2005 Shoot-Out

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Pioneer Press

June 1, 2006

Two Morton Grove police officers involved in a shoot-out with a pair of home invasion suspects last year are among fewer than two dozen officers nationwide honored by the National Association of Police Organizations.

Sgt. Brian Fennelly and Det. Robert Zielinski recently received the TOP COPS award in Washington D.C. for their part in the January 2005 shoot-out in a Chicago apartment building. Chicago Sgt. Richard Plotke, who accompanied them when they attempted to serve a search warrant at the apartment, also received the award.

Fennelly was shot when the two men, who were shot and killed by officers, opened fire on police. His life was saved by his body armor.

A total of 23 officers nationwide received the award in connection with 10 cases. Recipients were nominated by fellow officers and chosen by an independent awards committee.

The Morton Grove officers were further recognized when U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-9th, entered a statement about them into the Congressional Record. "Their heroic demonstration of bravery and team work and public service certainly makes them Top Cops in my book and in the eyes of their peers," she said.

The shoot-out stemmed from the investigation into a home invasion Jan. 20, 2005, in which a Morton Grove woman was pistol whipped.

That happened as the 53-year-old woman was getting out of her car in the garage of her home on the 7100 block of Golf Road. Police said she was struck from behind and duct tape was put over her eyes.

Police said the offender heard the woman's roommate come home, grabbed the victim's purse and fled.

Based on the license plate and description of the suspects' vehicle Fennelly and Zielinski put together a photo lineup in which the victim identified her attackers. The officers obtained a warrant to search the suspects' apartment for items taken from the victim.

When officers entered the apartment one of the suspects, armed with a semi-automatic pistol, took aim at the officers. The suspect raised his gun and officers shot the gunman, who dropped to the floor.

A second man came down a hallway and began firing repeatedly, hitting Fennelly in the chest before he too was shot by officers.

The National Association of Police Organizations is a national law enforcement organization representing 238,000 law enforcement officers and 2,000 police units and associations throughout the country.