

To: WLECHA Awards Committee

I would like to nominate Stevens Point Police Department Sgt. JD Ballew and his K9 partner Barry, for the Meritorious Narcotic Find of the Year. As a result of a traffic stop and K9 sniff of the vehicle, an investigation was started which included Investigators from the Portage County Sheriff's Office, the Stevens Point Police Department, the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department, and the Central Wisconsin Drug Task Force. As a result of the investigation, three search warrants were conducted, numerous arrests were made, and nearly three pounds of marijuana seized, along with 1.25 pounds of methamphetamine seized.

On Friday, January 8, 2021, Portage County Sheriff's Office Deputy Cody Potocki was on patrol in the Township of Hull and noticed a vehicle pass him, having two equipment violations. Deputy Potocki conducted a traffic stop with this vehicle and during the stop, Deputy Potocki learned the driver was involved in a recent incident where a K9 sniff was conducted. As a result of that incident, drugs and drug paraphernalia were located. With this information, Deputy Potocki now requested Stevens Point Police Department Sgt. Ballew and K9 Barry to come to his location to conduct a free air sniff of the vehicle. Sgt. Ballew arrived within the normal scope of the traffic stop, where K9 Barry did the free air sniff and provided an indication. Sgt. Ballew informed Deputy Potocki of K9 Barry's positive indication on the vehicle. The suspect was removed from the vehicle and subsequently the vehicle searched where the following contraband was located: 50 grams of marijuana, 31 grams of methamphetamine, 34 Gabapentin pills, and 18 Clonazepam pills.

As a result of the traffic stop the suspect was arrested and transported to the Portage County Jail. Interviews were conducted with the suspect and he agreed to cooperate with Investigators. Portage County Sheriff's Office Investigator Anthony Gischia was contacted, and an investigation was started. It was immediately recognized this traffic stop that began with a positive indication from K9 Barry was developing into a large-scale investigation. Investigator Gischia requested the assistance of the Central Wisconsin Drug Task Force to assist him with three search warrants that were executed in two separate Portage County homes, along with one home in the City of Wisconsin Rapids.

As a result of these search warrants four suspects were arrested. Suspect 1 was arrested for: Delivery of Methamphetamine (5 counts), Possession with the Intent to Deliver Methamphetamine (3 counts), Possession of THC, Possession of LSD, Maintaining a Drug House, and Felon in Possession of a Firearm. Suspect 2 was arrested for: Possession of Methamphetamine and Possession of THC (2nd). Suspect 3 was arrested for: Possession of Methamphetamine. Suspect 4 was arrested for: Possession of THC and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia. The total drug amounts seized as a direct result of the traffic stop and the free air sniff conducted by Sgt Ballew and K9 Barry are:

- * 1.25 pounds of Methamphetamine
- * 2.5 pounds of marijuana
- * 34 Gabapentin pills
- * 18 Clonazepam pills
- * 3 dabs of LSD

This routine traffic stop conducted by Deputy Potocki, and the subsequent search conducted by Sgt. Ballew and K9 Barry, evolved into a large-scale investigation involving numerous law enforcement agencies. The multiple arrests, and large amount of drugs confiscated, made an impact on reducing drug sales in the community. Sgt. Ballew and K9 Barry have always made themselves available to assist local law enforcement and will continue to do so in the future. It is for these reasons that I nominate Sgt. Ballew and K9 Barry for the Meritorious Narcotic Find of the Year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deputy Dan Wachowiak

Portage County Sheriff's Office