'Excellence in our midst:' DA honors cops, prosecutor and citizens for crime fighting

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By Matt Miller | mmiller@pennlive.com

District Attorney Fran Chardo told the crowd gathered in the Dauphin County Courthouse lobby on Friday morning that it is important to recognize the "excellence in our midst."

Then, he proceeded to do just that.

Over the next few minutes, Chardo handed out his first Hometown Heroes Awards to four police officers, one of his busiest homicide prosecutors and three Harrisburg residents who stepped up after a horrific and ultimately fatal shooting spree in the city this past December.

First up to the awards table was Susquehanna Township Patrol Officer Joshua Dupler, recipient of the Sergeant Robert "Bo" McAllister Outstanding Service as a Patrol Officer Award.

Dupler, a two-year veteran of the township department and former member of the Northern Lancaster County Regional Police, makes a point of hitting the street with foot patrols and engaging and building relationships with the people on his beat, Chardo said. On a recent patrol, Dupler thwarted a 3 a.m. burglary.

The Detective Samuel Thomas Kohr Memorial Award for Outstanding Service as a Detective went to Harrisburg Detective Richard Iachini.

Iachini has been the lead investigator on an array of homicide cases. Chardo focused on Iachini's role in the convictions of two men for the March 2016 murder of John Carter, the nephew of city Police Chief Thomas Carter.

Iachini's pursuit of that case was "dogged," Chardo said, even though he had to deal with hostile and uncooperative witnesses. "Rick got to the truth, but maintained his professionalism throughout," the DA said.

Iachini's prosecutorial partner in the Carter murder case, Chief Deputy District Attorney Johnny Baer, was tapped for the LeRoy S. Zimmerman Award for Outstanding Service as a Prosecutor Award. The Carter case is just one of about 50 homicide prosecutions Baer has handled.

"He is tireless in his preparation and devoted to doing it the right way," Chardo said of Baer. "Ensuring that murderers are held accountable is his passion."

The District Attorney's Award for Valor went to state Trooper Wesley A. Johnson and Harrisburg Police Officer Chad McGowan. They risked their lives during the Dec. 22 shootout in Harrisburg that ended the spree of gunman Ahmed El-Mofty, Chardo said.

"Both officers exhibited extraordinary courage," Chardo said.

Police killed El-Mofty, a 51-year-old naturalized U.S. citizen from Egypt, after he went on a cross-city shooting spree targeting cops. El-Mofty shot at the cruiser of a Capitol Police officer and wounded a state trooper before being killed while shooting at more officers at 17th and Mulberry streets.

Chardo's Citizens Award went to three city business owners - Kerry N. Hitt, Juan Carlos Valdez Ramos and Renato P. Dellaporta Jr. - who aided the investigation after El-Mofty was killed.

Hitt and Ramos provided vital video evidence in the case, the DA said. He said Dellaporta also provided video of the shoot-out and temporarily closed his business so police could use it as a command post.