Medals of Valor

Deputy Wayne Joseph

In the early morning hours of Nov. 8, 1998, a home just steps away from St. Charles Parish Hospital became engulfed in flames. Neighbors saw the smoke, and immediately called 9-1-1 to report the fire.

Deputy Wayne Joseph was patrolling Paul Mallard Road that Sunday. A couple of minutes prior to the call, he had passed the house. At that time, there were no signs for alarm.

Once the call for help was issued, Deputy Joseph quickly circled back to the house. When he arrived at the scene moments later, the house was completely ablaze.

Family members and friends who had gathered on the lawn to help informed Deputy Joseph that the house was occupied. The officer entered the burning building through a side door to search for survivors.

A few steps into the dwelling, smoke forced him to his knees. Through the thick, black smoke, Deputy Joseph continued calling out to those inside the burning house. Just as the deputy was about to crawl out, a white sock caught his attention. He reached out and pulled a 6-year-old boy, unconscious from the smoke, to safety.

Once outside the house, Deputy Joseph ran, with the child in his arms, across the street and into the hospital's emergency room. Doctors immediately began resuscitative measures.

Stephon Gordon, the young boy Deputy Joseph pulled from the burning house, survived the incident, which claimed the lives of his grandfather and 18-month-old brother.

For the act of bravery in saving the child's life with no regard for his own safety, Deputy Wayne Joseph was awarded the St. Charles Parish Sheriff Dept.'s 1999 Award for Valor.

Deputy Joseph was again honored for his heroics during the incident. He received American Legion Hall Post 366's Deputy of the Year award for St. Charles Parish. In addition, he was given the Medal of Valor from the National Sheriff's Association, which includes thousands of sheriffs from across the United States. Sheriff Greg Champagne presented the award this March during a St. Charles Parish Rotary Club luncheon in Luling.