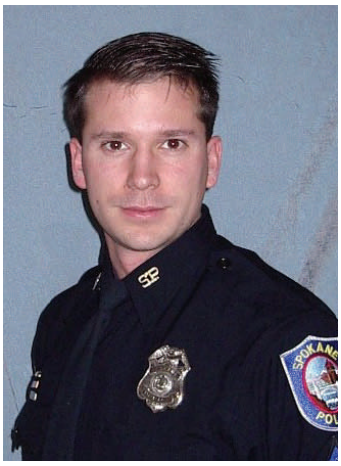
OFFICER MATT COWLES

The Lifesaving Award is given to department personnel who, by their immediate actions, have saved a human life under unusual and/or extraordinary circumstances.



On May 22, 2002, Officer Matt Cowles was the first officer on scene at the Rosamond overpass of Sunset Boulevard. A suicidal man was standing on the outside railing of the bridge. Ofc. Cowles immediately grabbed the man's arm and handcuffed him to the bridge railing, closing the cuff tightly so it wouldn't slip off were he to jump. Where others might have attempted verbal techniques first, Ofc. Cowles quickly determined that the man was about to jump and he knew there was not a moment to spare.

While Ofc. Cowles and a citizen held onto him, the man continued to fight violently and tried to pull away. At the same time, Ofc. Cowles gave clear and concise directions for other officers who were arriving on the scene. The subject continued to struggle, resisting efforts to pull him over the railing, and did not respond to pain compliance techniques. With no other recourse, while leaning over the railing, Ofc. Cowles placed the man in a vascular neck restraint until he stopped resisting. Ofc. Cowles and the other officers were then able to pull him over the railing.

Ofc. Cowles has been admired for his quick thinking and willingness to put aside his personal safety in order to save the life of a citizen. Ofc. Cowles' quick, decisive actions are a tribute to him and a positive reflection on his training as well as Spokane Police Department. It is clear his actions are most deserving of the Lifesaving Medal.