

## Police Cousins Recognized for Saving Woman's Life

Cousins Ryan and Garrett Chapko have a lot in common growing up with identical twins as fathers and working for the same police department. Now they are being honored for saving a woman's life. Corunna Police Officer Ryan Chapko and Corunna Reserve Officer Garrett Chapko worked together to rescue a suicidal woman from icy waters Jan. 9, 2016, earning them recognition within their department and from the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP). The two were chosen for the LEEP Outstanding Service Award (OSA).

After making contact with the woman's sister who reported her location, Garrett Chapko found the suicidal woman walking near the Shiawassee River and signaled his partner. "I turned around and went in along the shore by the waterfall and I was coming up behind her," Ryan said. She saw the officers, said some choice words and jumped into the frigid water. "I remember her looking back at me and saying ... 'I'm done.' After that I just watched her start to fade away in the water," Ryan said. He immediately jumped in after her and began searching. "I'm just thinking, 'It's dark, and I don't know if there's a current right now, but there might be. If she gets too far away from us she could be in real trouble.'"

What Ryan didn't think twice about was his own safety. "I knew I had a job that had to be done," he said. "Honestly I didn't have any concern for myself. I just wanted to get her out of there. If something started happening to me, I knew my cousin would help me out." Garrett following Ryan along the shoreline, helping him locate the woman. "I grabbed her, wrapped my arm around her," Ryan said. "I was trying to keep my footing on uneven rocks."

"I was nervous, but I knew I wouldn't let anything happen to him," Garrett said. "He jumped in and I stood on the side so I had his back. When he got a hold of her, I made sure he didn't slip and, when he got closer, I helped bring her out onto the land."

Their teamwork and bravery earned them two  
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sets of lifesaving awards. "I commend Officer Ryan Chapko and Reserve Officer Garrett Chapko for their quick thinking and reactions, not fearing the frigid water and saving the life of the suicidal female subject," said Corunna Police Chief Nick Chiros, when presenting Lifesaving Awards to the two. "I offer my deepest gratitude and heartfelt thanks. They do the job and do it well. At times they go above and beyond."

"I'm very honored," Garrett said of the City and LEEP awards. "I just do it to help people really; I don't do it for the awards."

"It's not something we're expected to do, it's just something we're willing to do — to put our lives on the line to save someone's life," Ryan said. "There are always risks in this job, and we're all aware of it, but we don't like to think about it. When it's all done and over with, stuff starts to go through your head. How can I do it different or what if this would've happened?"

Ryan and Garrett grew up playing cops and robbers together, but both men thought they would end up in military careers. Ryan did work as a Military Police Officer for the Army 58th MP Company in Hawaii from 2005-2008 and was honorably discharged due to a herniated disc. "Every little kid has that dream," Ryan said. "They're always playing cops and robbers. My goal in school was going into the military," however, after the injury, "I went back to Criminal Justice and got an associate's degree."

Wanting to work close to home, Ryan applied to Corunna Police Department. "The Chief there gave me the opportunity. I found out they had reserves and Garrett did a ride along and liked it so he got the reserve spot," Ryan said. While Garrett's position is unpaid volunteer, it has moved him to pursue law enforcement as a career. "I really want to get into the State Police," Garrett said. "I'm trying to get into shape and applying to the academy soon. I'm just one of those people that always want to help others if I can."

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