

FEATURED TOP STORY BREAKING

Wintergreen police officer shot, killed responding to assault incident; suspect in custody

Justin Faulconer

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A Wintergreen Police Department officer was killed Friday in an incident involving three other injured men, including a suspect involved in the shooting, according to a Virginia State Police news release.

The incident began after 10 p.m. Friday when an emergency call came into the Nelson County resort community's police department about an man having assaulted two other men at a residence on Arrowood Lane, the release said. After calling police, the two injured men fled the residence on foot, according to police.

Those two individuals are being treated the University of Virginia Medical Center for non-life threatening injuries, police said. "At this stage of the investigation, it appears the first Wintergreen Police Officer to arrive at the residence located the adult male suspect in the nearby woods and a struggle ensued," the release said. "During the course of the struggle, the officer was shot and died at the scene."

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The male suspect, who police did not immediately identify in the release, was taken into custody without further incident by Wintergreen police and the Nelson County Sheriff's Office. The suspect suffered a non-life threatening injury and was taken to the UVa Medical Center for treatment, the release said.

Wintergreen Police Chief Dennis Russell requested the Virginia State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation's Appomattox Field Office to investigate the fatal shooting.

The officer's department-issued firearm was recovered at the scene in the woods and the investigation remains ongoing, the release said.

A post from the Wintergreen Police Department's official Facebook page identified the slain officer was Mark Christopher Wagner II. The department's page described Wagner as a dedicated officer who served the Wintergreen community with honor and answered his final call by laying down his life for the people he swore to protect and serve.

Wagner, 31, was a 2010 graduate of Spotswood High School and lived in Stuarts Draft. "Chris is survived by his immediate family and the men and women who were his Wintergreen Police family," the department's post said.

Wagner started his career at Wintergreen in August 2020 and previously served with the Massanutten Police Department, according to the Wintergreen department. He graduated from the Central Shenandoah Criminal Justice Academy in May 2019 and was tasked with working the midnight shift, the department's post said.

"Whenever you saw Chris in the daylight, he wore dark sunglasses, and would crack a smile or two," the department's post said. "Chris was dedicated to his job and whenever called for extra duty he was ready, willing and able. His love for the badge was evident and his commitment to the community was undeniable."

An avid outdoorsman, Wagner spent much personal time hiking and photographing nature, according to the department.

“Chris is remembered for always going out of his way to cheer others up and his infectious laugh was loud and echoed throughout the office,” the department’s post said.

Wagner was the agency’s TASER and BolaWrap instructor, the post said. His father, holding back tearful emotions, remarked he was like Batman and was reminded of recently gifting his son a Batarang, a throwing weapon used by the DC Comics Superhero character, to go with all the tools he carried on his belt, according to the post.

“Chris Wagner, Wintergreen Police Officer ID#15, was and always will be a hero,” the department wrote.

The Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police recommends all Virginia law enforcement officers shroud their badges in Wagner’s honor the day of funeral services, according to a post the department’s Facebook page.

“The VACP expresses our sincerest condolences to Chief Dennis Russell and the Wintergreen Police Department and the family and friends [of] Officer Wagner,” the post said. “Our prayers are with them at this most difficult time.”

A fund has been set up in Wagner’s memory: in interested in giving the link is is: **<https://fundthefirst.com/campaign/fallen-officer-mark-christopher-chris-wagner-ii-wintergreen-police-department-va-h3a9oi>**.

Nelson County Board of Supervisors Chair Jesse Rutherford, on his personal Facebook page Saturday, joined multiple law enforcement agencies across the state in addressing Wagner’s death in the line of duty.

“Today is a sad day for Nelson County,” Rutherford wrote. “Please be in prayer for our Wintergreen Police and law enforcement community.”



Wagner

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