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Buckhead Business Association honors officers, citizens

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Special photo

From left, Atlanta Police Maj. Robert Browning (one of two Officers of the Quarter), Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed and Buckhead Business Association President Heather Wright. Fulton County Sheriff's Deputy Corey Henry was the other officer honored.



The Buckhead Business Association last week honored two officers and three citizens for helping arrest two suspects this spring.

At its quarterly luncheon at 103 West, the organization named Atlanta Police Maj. Robert Browning and Fulton County Sheriff's Deputy Corey Henry its Officers of the Quarter and Fifth Third Bank employees William Walts, Tara Harley and Stephanie McCorvey Citizens of the Quarter for their roles.

Browning and the bank employees were awarded for helping nab Ray Gilbert, the "Hobo Bandit" wanted for robbing three Buckhead banks beginning in November. On March 31 Walts, Ms. Harley and Ms. McCorvey, then tellers at Fifth Third Bank, were having lunch at Chick-fil-A on the Terminus complex patio facing Peachtree Road near the Piedmont Road intersection.

They saw Gilbert, who in December had allegedly robbed their bank, walking down the Peachtree sidewalk and Walts called 911 from his cell phone. The trio watched the suspect walk across the street to a Wachovia Bank branch, which he robbed. Browning was on patrol on Piedmont when he got the call about Gilbert being in the area. After Gilbert exited the building and crossed Peachtree, Browning was in his car at the Peachtree-Piedmont intersection, spotted him, got out and arrested him, thanks to information the tellers provided.

"It feels great. I'm glad we could spot him and bring [the suspect] to justice," Walts said of the award.

Ms. Harley added, "It feels great to be acknowledged. As it was happening, [calling the police] felt like the right thing to do."

Browning, commander of the Zone 2 substation in Buckhead, has been with the Atlanta police for nearly 27 years. He thanked the bank employees for getting involved, something not enough people do, he said.

"If it hadn't been for those tellers, we would have never caught [Gilbert]," Browning said. "I caught him before the bank alarm even went into our [police] communications.

"I think it's great to be recognized by the community for service to the community."

Henry, an officer with the K-9 unit, was honored for helping capture a burglary suspect in May. The Fulton County Police Department spotted two suspects in a vehicle leaving a south Fulton house they allegedly burglarized. During a chase with police, they abandoned their vehicle and fled on foot in the Butner Road/Palmetto Avnue area. Henry was called to bring his dog Marco, a Belgian Melaniois, to help track the suspects through a wooded area for more than two hours. When one suspect was Tased by another officer and remained on his feet, Henry wrestled him to the ground. The other suspect escaped and is still at large, he said.

"It feels good [to win the award]," said Henry, a 13-year veteran with the department who has spent 17 years in law enforcement. "I think is a very honorable thing the Buckhead Business Association does honoring officers. It's not often people say thank you. I know it's our job, it's what we get paid to do and it's what we have a passion to do. But every now and then it feels good to be recognized."

Brian Daughdrill, the association's vice president for public safety, said the citizens were honored for their extraordinary efforts and that award is likely a one-time honor unless another citizen does something similar to deserve the recognition.

Regarding the officers honored, Daughdrill said, "BBA is a service organization. It recognizes the importance of what these officers do for our community. ... They're the ones protecting us. They're not doing it to get rich and retire."

Daughdrill also said the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department did not nominate a firefighter of the quarter, in part because it would like to recognize an entire company of firefighters at a time.

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