

ONALASKA HOLMEN Courier-Life

Kohl delivers congressional recognition for officers



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MIKE.MARTIN@LEE.NET

Onalaska police officer James Page and La Crosse County Deputy Sheriff Daniel Baudek were honored Wednesday at Onalaska City Hall with the U.S. Justice Department's Congressional Badge of Bravery. They were the first officers in the nation to receive the honor.

The award was presented by U.S. Sen. Herb Kohl, who told the men that their actions responding to a domestic violence call in the town of Hamilton on May 29, 2010, "made their community and the entire state of Wisconsin proud."

The officers pulled two girls and two dogs from a smokefilled home that had been set on fire by their father, Keith Marchbanks, after he stabbed his 45-year-old estranged wife in the leg and stomach.

Confronted by a knife-wielding Marchbanks in the home's driveway after rescuing the girls, the officers ordered him to drop the

weapon. When he refused to do so and charged Page as Page was backing down the driveway, Marchbanks was shot and subsequently paralyzed from the waist down.

In lauding the two officers professionalism at Wednesday's ceremony, Onalaska Police Chief Jeff Trotnic noted that they had responded to a domestic violence call "in the middle of nowhere" with two children trapped in the basement and the house on fire.

"It doesn't get much more intense than that," Trotnic said.

John Vaudreuill, the U.S. attorney for Wisconsin's Western District, explained that Baudek and Page were the very first recipients of Congressional Badge of Bravery. Congress created the award with the Badge of Bravery Act of 2008.

Vaudreuill said that many nominations had been received. Nominations had to pass through two review boards and then the final decision was made by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.

Nine federal officers and 12 state and local officers were ultimately chosen to receive the Badge of Bravery in the first round of recognition, but Baudek and Page were the first to receive their awards.

“I’m extremely humbled to be here today,” Page said. “It’s not anything anyone else here would not have done. My prayers still go out to the Marchbanks family — that still weighs heavily on my mind.”