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Chamber salutes public service workers



Holden Police Officer Jonathan Santimore is being honored as Public Safety Person of the Year by the Holden Chamber of Commerce. The chamber is also recognizing Raymond Leroux for his efforts to invest in the town and the public service employees of Holden, Paxton, Princeton and Rutland. (T&G Staff/CHRISTINE PETERSON)

By **Sandy Meindersma** CORRESPONDENT
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HOLDEN — The Holden Area Chamber of Commerce is recognizing two individuals as well as all the public service employees in Holden, Paxton, Princeton and Rutland at its annual Salute Breakfast April 22.

Local businessman Raymond Leroux is being honored for his many efforts to reinvest in town, and Holden Police Officer Jonathan Santimore is being honored as the Public Safety Person of the Year.

"We look to honor those people who make our community a better place to live and work," Jennifer J. Stanovich, executive director of the chamber, said.

Mrs. Stanovich said the committee began its annual search for individuals who stood out in the community shortly after the ice storm, and the public safety employees were the first people who came to mind.

"(We wanted to honor) all those people who were out there working around the clock for us," she said.

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Mr. Leroux owns a number of commercial buildings in town, and his latest building, which is next to Jed's Hardware on Main Street, is full with new tenants.

Officer Santimore has been with the Holden Police Department for eight years. He was nominated by Police Chief George R. Sherrill, in recognition of Officer Santimore's role in resolving the April 2008 fight involving students from Wachusett Regional High School that quickly gained national attention.

"It was a lengthy investigation," Chief Sherrill said. "But it ended up with four or five arrests."

Officer Santimore said he initially was called to the fight scene, but it had broken up by the time he arrived. It was not until someone arrived at the station with a cell-phone video of the fight that the investigation was launched.

Officer Santimore also was involved in finding an alleged kidnapper in West Boylston, when the Holden Police Department was called to assist West Boylston officers.

"The West Boylston police had a set up a perimeter, and I was parked off the side of the road on Route 12, when a guy walked up toward me," Officer Santimore said. "He fit the description, so I called him over, engaged him in a conversation and called the West Boylston police and said that I thought that this was their suspect."

Chief Sherrill had high praise for Officer Santimore. "He has a terrific attitude and a positive outlook on police work and life in general."

Officer Santimore was hesitant about the limelight.

"We're all out for the best interests of the town," he said.

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