

THE CHAMBER ALX'S

Community Champions Honors

PRESENTED BY INOVA HEALTH SYSTEM

May 2025

Celebrating the
dedication of
Alexandria's
service-based
workforce





2025 HONOREES

1-2 Alexandria Sheriff's Office Deputy Jaida Rose Deputy Michael Spitzer

On June 13, 2024, Deputy Jaida Rose, on her way to her overnight shift, witnessed a pickup truck driving recklessly on the Beltway before it crashed into a barrier and flipped several times. Without hesitation, she stopped, ran toward the overturned truck, and worked with the driver to rescue four passengers, including small children, who were still inside. Deputy Michael Spitzer, a U.S. Army veteran, stopped on his way to work to assist, helping to keep the victims safe from traffic while providing aid. After calling 911, Deputy Rose remained on the scene to brief first responders and assist until cleared by Virginia State Police. Thanks to their swift actions the deputies saved the lives of the victims and prevented further tragedy.

3-4 Alexandria Police Department Officer David Hiltz Officer Liam Reilly

On May 28, 2024, Officers Hiltz and Reilly responded to a call for an unresponsive newborn in Alexandria, Virginia. Upon arrival, they learned that the mother, unaware of her pregnancy, had unexpectedly given birth in the bathroom and the baby was unresponsive. Without hesitation, Officer Hiltz immediately performed CPR, successfully reviving the newborn after two rounds. Officer Reilly assisted in the effort and helped keep the family calm during the intense situation. Both officers were credited by the EMS Lieutenant and the emergency room doctor for their life-saving actions, which exemplified the critical training and professionalism expected of first responders.

5-9 Department of Emergency Customer Communications & Alexandria Fire Department Public Safety Communications Supervisor Autumn Harding Firefighter Nicolas Hicks Firefighter Zach Liggett Captain Michael Malec Firefighter Christopher Yashin

At approximately 1:15 a.m., Supervisor Autumn Harding received an emergency call from a distressed resident who had fallen and was hanging from her fifth-floor balcony, her strength quickly failing. The resident, who was also pregnant, expressed fear and desperation as she clung to the balcony, but Harding remained calm, offering reassurance and gathering vital information to relay to responders. Units were dispatched to conduct a rope rescue, but before the rescue equipment could be fully deployed, the crew of Engine 204, including Captain Michael Malec and Firefighters Nicolas Hicks, Zachary Liggett, and Christopher Yashin recognized the urgency of the situation. They swiftly pulled the resident over the balcony railing to safety. The crew's quick thinking and bravery saved the resident from an imminent fall, demonstrating exceptional courage and teamwork under pressure.

10 Alexandria Fire Department Marine Operations Division

The Alexandria Chamber of Commerce is recognizing the Alexandria Fire Department's Marine Operations Division for its heroic and tireless efforts following the 2025 mid-air collision over the Potomac River. In the wake of the tragic incident, the Marine Operations Division played a pivotal role in coordinating complex rescue and recovery missions across challenging terrain—both on water and along the shoreline. Their swift response, technical expertise, and unwavering dedication were crucial in ensuring public safety and supporting federal and regional emergency teams during a highly demanding operation. Fire Chief Felipe Hernandez, Jr. will accept the award on behalf of the team.

11 Educator of the Year - Sharon Phox Third Grade Teacher James K. Polk Elementary School

Sharon is being honored for 20 years of extraordinary service as an educator—years marked by her unwavering dedication to inspiring students, uplifting colleagues, and enriching her community. Her deep commitment to creating a nurturing and inclusive learning environment has helped generations of students thrive not only academically, but emotionally and socially. Sharon's legacy is one of excellence, compassion, and tireless service. Her influence resonates far beyond the classroom.

12 Government Employee of the Year - Esperita J. Bullard

Division Chief of Customer Relations, Department of Community & Human Services
City of Alexandria

Esperita is a compassionate and visionary leader at the Center for Economic Support, where she and her team serve thousands of Alexandrians each year. She creates a welcoming environment for individuals and families facing financial hardship. Esperita has been a driving force behind the city's food security initiatives, forging strong partnerships and expanding access to farmer's markets where SNAP benefits can be used—ensuring healthy food is within reach for more residents. Her commitment to equity is equally evident in her efforts to improve language access, helping all members of the community understand and connect with vital resources.

13 Hospitality Employee of the Year - Jeffry Alberto

General Manager
Tequila & Taco

Jeffry's journey in the hospitality industry is nothing short of inspiring. Starting as a dishwasher ten years ago, he has steadily risen through the ranks to become the General Manager—now the welcoming and familiar face of the restaurant group. Known for his positivity, Jeffry tackles every task without hesitation, earning the admiration of regulars for both his exceptional service and the genuine care he brings to every interaction. He is a shining example of what the hospitality industry strives for—someone whose passion, energy, and kindness are simply unmatched. Jeffry deeply understands what it means to work from the ground up, and he leads with empathy, often quietly stepping in to support employees in times of need. His love for people and for the industry is rare and deeply felt by everyone around him.

14 Health Professional of the Year - Dr. David Weintritt

Founder & President
National Breast Center Foundation

Dr. David Weintritt founded the National Breast Center Foundation in 2014, establishing the only comprehensive breast health foundation in Alexandria focused on education, access to care, and advancing breast cancer technology. For nearly a decade, the Foundation has provided free screenings, diagnostics, and treatment to underserved women, primarily uninsured women of color in Alexandria. Despite a demanding medical practice and global commitments in research and education, Dr. Weintritt remains deeply devoted to patients with nowhere else to turn. In 2015, he launched the Walk to Bust Cancer, a powerful community event celebrating survivors, honoring those lost, and supporting those in treatment.

15 Senior Provider of the Year - Tesfaye Reta

Staff Driver & Outreach Coordinator
Senior Services of Alexandria

Tesfaye joined Senior Services Alexandria in 2021 as a part-time driver, where he quickly stood out for his compassion on the Meals on Wheels route. Promoted to Outreach Coordinator, his Amharic fluency and Ethiopian heritage enabled him to connect with Alexandria's Amharic-speaking community through outreach, events, and advocacy for older adults. He has since organized traditional Coffee Ceremonies and exercise classes, aimed at fostering community health and well-being. Tesfaye also recruits Senior Ambassador volunteers, who he mentors to support senior initiatives. Tesfaye's journey from driver to leader highlights his dedication to serving vulnerable populations and bridging cultural divides in Alexandria.

16 Utility Employee of the Year - Heather Kerr

Technical Trainer
AlexRenew

Heather joined AlexRenew as a Wastewater Operations Technician and quickly identified the need for standardized training. Promoted to lead the initiative, she developed and implemented the Operational Training Program, combining hands-on experience with technical instruction to enhance operator skills and foster workforce growth. Her commitment to AlexRenew's mission has made the program a cornerstone of workforce development, driving a 25% promotion rate and improved performance. Heather's leadership and adaptability have made her an invaluable member of the team, leaving a lasting impact on the organization.





Supporting Businesses &
Cultivating Community

The Chamber ALX

333 N. Fairfax Street, Suite 302
Alexandria, VA 22314

Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter & LinkedIn
[@thechamberalx](#)

THANK YOU!

EVENT SPONSORS

PRESENTING SPONSOR



STAGE SPONSOR



AWARD & REGISTRATION



FRIEND SPONSORS



PATRON SPONSORS

CommonWealth One Federal Credit Union

Redmon, Peyton & Braswell LLP