

Meriden

Police, firefighters receive awards

By Andrew Ragali
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MERIDEN — The Community Health Center of Meriden showed its appreciation for the service of local police and firefighters and their emergency medical response expertise in a brief ceremony on the first floor of the health center Tuesday afternoon.

"They've been very good to us," Mayor Michael S. Rohde said. "There's been 20 years of service."

The act of appreciation came during National Community Health Center Week. The Meriden health center has been operating for 20 years, and branched off from the Community Health Center of Middletown, which opened 40 years ago.

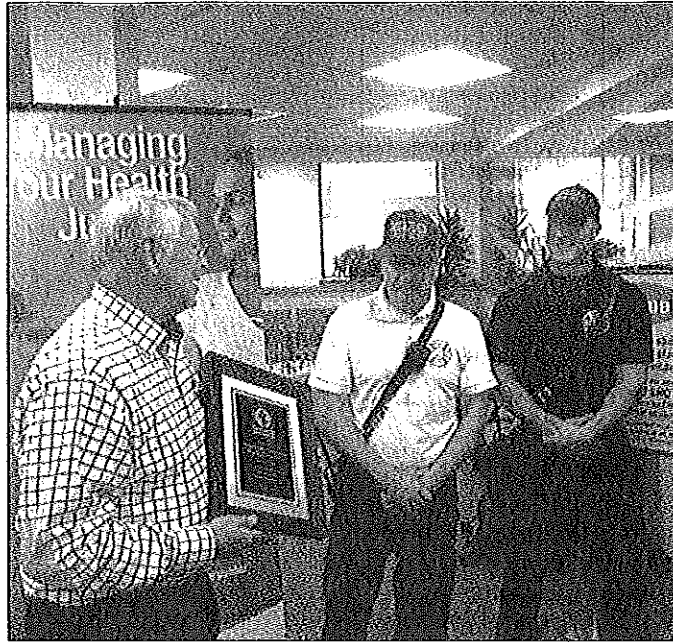
Rohde presented one plaque each to Meriden's police and fire forces.

"It's fitting we would give the awards at the health center because you're here so much," Rohde said in a short speech.

After presenting Engine Company 2 Capt. Robert Gawel with the plaque, Gawel, a 34-year veteran, jokingly responded, "You're right, we do come here a lot."

"We've gotten very friendly, and you're a good group of people," Gawel said.

Rohde said the city has never handed out awards as it



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Mayor Michael S. Rohde presents an award of appreciation to Fire Department Engine Company 2 Capt. Robert Gawel and Firefighter Chris Gersz.

did on Tuesday. It was suggested that the city use this week as an opportunity to honor emergency medical responders, and "everybody said it would be a great idea," Rohde said.

After the ceremony, police officers couldn't stick around

long, but firefighters from Engine 2 stayed to socialize and enjoy much-appreciated air conditioning for a few more minutes.

Deputy Chief Dave Bowen said his firefighters aren't in their profession for medals.

"When you're kneeling at the door of a house fire, you're not in this for awards," he said. "They know they have a job to do."

Bowen said Engine 2 is the busiest in the city, and second to none.

"We do everything from heart attacks to delivering babies," Bowen said.

While the Fire Department makes sure the city doesn't burn down, Bowen said 65 percent of calls the department responds to are emergency medical situations.

"The department prides itself on compassion and giving everyone the best medical treatment possible," Bowen said.

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