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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE: **IMMEDIATE**

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NN Sheriff Gabe Morgan named Citizen of the Year

On March 26, 2010, The Virginia Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (VAADAC) named Newport News Sheriff Gabe Morgan as their "CITIZEN OF THE YEAR."

Morgan was congratulated for his efforts to reduce recidivism through educational opportunities at the Newport News City Jail (NNCJ). In 2009, 31 inmates earned their GED while behind bars. GED is one of 44 different classes taught weekly at the jail and jail annex.

Morgan is determined to develop programs and support existing programs that help stop the revolving door of imprisonment. Education is one way. Another is by getting to the root of substance abuse. Addiction is a driving force behind many criminal behaviors. Various counseling programs are offered at the jail. Plus, Sheriff Morgan is a strong supporter of the Newport News Drug Court which provides an alternative to jail. This is only one example of Morgan's collaborative work with private and public organizations.

Mental illness and its impact on incarceration rates is another complicated issue that Sheriff Morgan continues to address. A high percentage of inmates are in need of mental health services, especially as beds at mental hospitals are being eliminated. Sheriff Morgan and the Community Services Board partnered on a Mental Health Jail Diversion Grant. The grant funds professional CSB health care workers to work in the City Jail providing treatment options for this special needs population.

Another component to the mental health issue is Morgan's goal to have all of his deputies and nurses trained in crisis intervention. They are systematically being rotated into classes offered by the CSB.

John Haywood, pictured left, Southeast Region President & Membership Chair of the Board of Directors for VAADAC and Ron Pritchard, right, President of VAADAC were pleased to honor Sheriff Gabe Morgan, center, for his many civic and professional commitments.

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For more information, contact Lt. Kathleen Carey at 757-926-8747 or 757-813-6139.