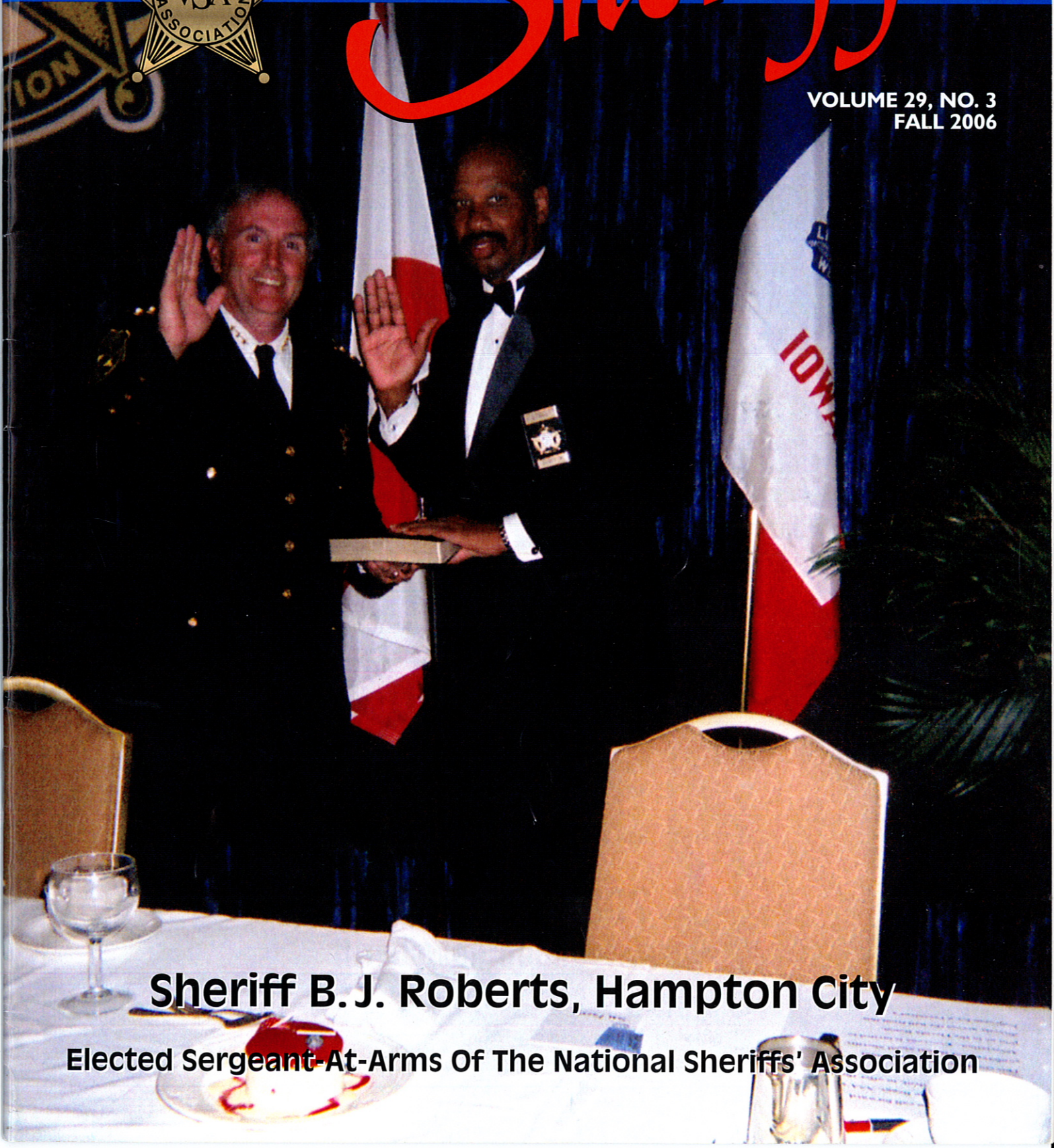


# VIRGINIA

# Sheriff



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**Sheriff B. J. Roberts, Hampton City**

**Elected Sergeant-At-Arms Of The National Sheriffs' Association**





Octavia Johnson with her husband, Mark Neese, and Judge Weckstein takes her oath of office December 19, 2005. She is the first woman and first minority sworn in as Sheriff of Roanoke.



Roanoke City Sheriff's Office Deputies take their oath of office.



# Local Media Shines Spotlight On Newport News Sheriff's Deputy

KATHLEEN CAREY, PIO

Sergeant Laura Saunders of the Newport News Sheriff's Office wears a shield like any other Deputy. But in addition to the department's five-point star, she can boast about possessing another star.

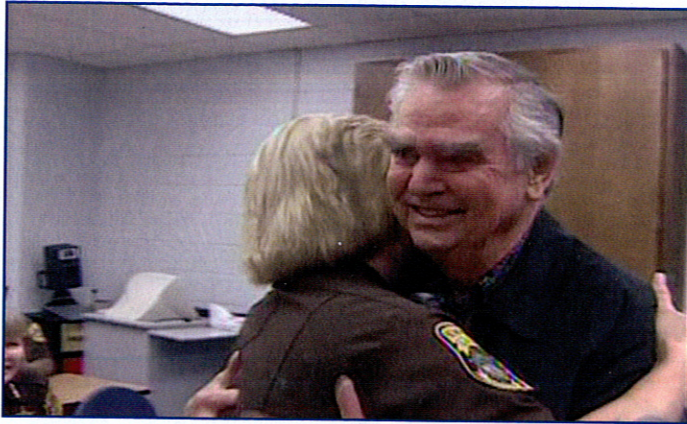
WAVY News 10, the local NBC affiliate, presented Saunders with their "Shining Star" award. The weekly feature spotlights those who make life better for others. Sergeant Saunders was a standout among the nominations received by the television station.

Saunders started a grassroots fundraising campaign to help a family in need. Only a month after baby Lily Linthicum celebrated her first birthday, she was diagnosed



Sergeant Laura Saunders being interviewed by WAVY TV-10. (PHOTO COURTESY OF WAVY TV-10)





Sergeant Laura Saunders hugs her father, Mr. Shirley Culpepper. (PHOTO COURTESY OF WAVY TV-10)



Shining Star plaque awarded Sergeant Laura Saunders (PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEWPORT NEWS SHERIFF'S OFFICE)

with a rare brain cancer. Ependymoma is a tumor that affects the central nervous system. The location of the tumor made it impossible for doctors to remove the entire growth. There started an arduous path of treatments. Not all expenses were covered by health insurance.

The first thing Sergeant Saunders did was place a collection bucket in a neighborhood pizza parlor. She plastered it with photos of Lily and included a description of the baby's battle with cancer. The outpouring of care and concern was overwhelming. Patrons of the pizza parlor knew they could trust the legitimacy of the fundraiser because it was headed by a law enforcement officer. The bucket collected spare change and an occasional bill. But some folks began sending checks directly to the Newport News Sheriff's Office.

So far, \$25,000 has been generously donated.

"I just treat others as I would want to be treated," Sergeant Saunders said humbly. "And baby Lily's family was in need. I was just glad I was able to assist them," she continued.

Unbeknownst to Saunders, her friend, Cheryl Penny, was on the phone to WAVY News 10. Penny believed the Sergeant deserved to be honored for giving her heart and soul, not only to the Linthicums, but to others—herself included.

"She (Saunders) helped me so much when my husband was diagnosed with cancer in 1998 and went through the regimen for 18 months of many different things," explained Penny. "She came in and made sure my kids went to school and did their homework. Got them to all their functions to extracurricular activities."

The television crew arrived at the Sheriff's Office in the morning

of May 10th. They were snuck into the facility without the Sergeant's knowledge. The training room was packed with supportive colleagues, including Sheriff Gabe Morgan. Even Saunders' father was in on the surprise. It left the "Shining Star" recipient nearly speechless. "Awesome," she uttered with a big grin.

After some hugs and handshakes, Sergeant Laura Saunders recovered from the surprise and modestly said, "I believe in hope. And beyond that, I have to give credit to my dad. He raised me right."

As for baby Lily, she is now 20 months old and on the road to recovery. April tests showed her tumor had shrunk away. Doctors will continue to run follow-up tests to make sure the tumor is, in fact, gone. Lily is finished with chemotherapy. Now she will undergo physical and speech therapy to regain the skills that were lost or damaged. Sergeant Saunders will remain by the little girl and her parents all the way through.



Lily Linthicum at 13 months old, just after brain surgery. (PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NEWPORT NEWS SHERIFF'S OFFICE)