

## **Colbert County Sheriff's Capt. Timothy Vanderford Receives Federal Law Enforcement Award**

TUSCUMBIA -- Colbert County Sheriff's Capt. Timothy Bryan Vanderford today received a national law enforcement award recognizing his integral role in the multi-agency investigation and federal prosecution of Ricky Walter Denton for armed bank robbery, identity theft and filing false federal tax returns.

U.S. Attorney Joyce White Vance, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Special Agent in Charge Veronica Hyman-Pillot, FBI Special Agent in Charge Richard D. Schwein Jr., and Colbert County Sheriff Ronnie May announced the presentation of Vanderford's award.

James Nolan, president of the Birmingham-based chapter of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, presented Vanderford with the FLEOA's 2012 State, County, Local or Special Police Investigative Award in a ceremony at the Colbert County Sheriff's Office in Tuscumbia. IRS Criminal Investigation Special Agent Matt Austin nominated Vanderford for the award. FLEOA presents national awards annually and last year announced Vanderford as its only 2012 recipient in the State, County, Local or Special Police category.

Vanderford, now Colbert County's chief investigator, was a sergeant in the department's Investigations Section when Denton, of Tuscumbia, robbed First Southern Bank in Colbert County in December 2009. The FBI and the Colbert County Sheriff's Office began investigating the bank robbery, and Vanderford was instrumental in conducting interviews, executing search warrants and testifying in hearings and at the trial that led to Denton's armed bank robbery conviction, Austin said in his nomination letter. During the course of the robbery investigation, Vanderford discovered that Denton also was running a federal tax fraud scheme by using stolen identities of Alabama State Prison inmates to create false tax returns. At the time of Denton's prosecution in 2011, the prison identity-theft scheme was the largest known to the IRS in Alabama, according to Austin. Denton and a co-conspirator, Joann Choat, stole \$148,000 from the IRS while Denton was in the state prison system.

"Capt. Tim Vanderford is an intelligent, hardworking, very capable investigator who is extremely diligent in reviewing all aspects of a case for the victim," Sheriff May said. "I am proud for him; he truly deserves this award."

"It is always a privilege to work with local law enforcement in an effort to protect and serve the public. We are extremely pleased that Capt. Vanderford, during the investigation, recognized the identity theft scheme and collaborated with us and other law enforcement to bring it to an end," said IRS SAC Hyman-Pillot. "Capt. Vanderford's years of training, hard work and perseverance have served him well, and we look forward to working with him again in the future."

"Capt. Vanderford's tenacity and attention to detail led to uncovering additional crimes, for which Denton and Choat are now being held accountable. This was simply outstanding work on his part and exemplifies what can be accomplished when law enforcement comes together in a spirit of cooperation with a common goal," said FBI SAC Schwein.

Vanderford began his law enforcement career with the Colbert County Sheriff's Office in 1996. He has received many awards for his work during that time, including Officer of the Year from both the Sheffield Elks Lodge and the Colbert County Exchange Club, 1999; Roper Marksmanship Award for Colbert County, 2000; and Alabama Governor's Office Law Enforcement Medal of Distinction, 2008. Vanderford also is a recent graduate of the FBI National Academy.

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