

# Robot

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sible by the 1033 Program, which permits the Secretary of Defense to transfer, without charge, excess U.S. Department of Defense supplies and equipment to state and local law enforcement agencies.

“It’s basically civilian law enforcement using military equipment that is no longer needed,” Paulsen said. “Everything about this robot is on loan from the Department of Defense. When we decide we don’t want it anymore, we will return it to them.”

Yankton Police Department members had talked about how useful such a robot would be during the last year, so when officers saw that 500 of them were being made available through the 1033 Program, they put in a request. The South Dakota Highway Patrol acquired two of the used robots, and Yankton received one.

# Women

From Page 1

Jane Pugh, Joan Neubauer, Diana Roth and Leah Smith.
The winner for the outstanding professional award was Judi O’Connell, while the outstanding community service winner was Jane Pugh.
“I feel so honored to receive this award,” O’Connell said. “All of the nominees here are outstanding Yankton citizens.”
O’Connell founded Judi’s Dance Studio in Yankton and has been involved with Yankton Area Arts, the Dance Network of South Dakota and Beta Sigma Phi.
When Pugh found out about winning her award she said every woman in the room deserves the award, but was appreciative of the achievement.

“Both emotionally and in my heart I can’t tell how much this means to me to win the award,” she said. “I’m honored and humbled and really can’t put any words to it. This event is important because women need to be honored for what they do in the community, and often times that doesn’t happen.”

Pugh has been involved with the Susan G. Komen Foundation, the Yankton Contact Center and the Human Services Center Advisory Board.

She also noted her battle to overcome drug and alcohol problems more than 20 years ago.
“When I first found out about the nomination, I said ‘Wow,’ and wondered who nominated me and why,” she said. “But I have put in a lot of work in the 24 years I’ve lived in Yankton and felt that it’s what I needed to do to be a part of the community.”

Paula Tacke, who is on the Women Community Leaders Committee of the Yankton Chamber of Commerce, said there were a number of qualities that separated O’Connell and Pugh from other nominees.

“It was a tough decision because there were a lot of really good applicants,” Tacke said. “Judi (O’Connell) was nominated by her daughter, who put a lot of love and passion into her application and resume. Jane (Pugh) had obstacles she had to overcome, but when she did, she went full speed ahead with being involved in the community.”

Tacke added that O’Connell has impacted a lot of lives both within the dance community and with the other programs with which she’s involved.

“This year we had fewer nominees than we’ve had in years past, but the voting for winners was really tight,” she said. “We had tough decisions to make on nominees and winners.”

Carla Addy, committee chair, said this year her group wanted to bring more attention to each nominee.

“The volunteer work that each of these ladies perform daily is truly amazing and inspiring,” she said. “Each nominee provides so much value to the community because of their hard work, and yet their efforts are mostly ‘behind the scenes.’”

Addy added that she enjoys praising the work, dedication and the tenacity of each of the nominees.

“Choosing a winner in each category is a difficult process. The committee works in a democratic matter — each member has one vote — and each member relies solely on the information in the nomination form,” she said. “This event is truly about recognizing the achievements of all the nominees — not just the winners.”

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“This is a tool that very few agencies, especially agencies of our size, have,” Burgeson said. “This is the exact same technology that’s being used in Afghanistan today. The only difference is, their robots have an articulating arm that they can use to grab and maneuver stuff and they are on tracks.”
R2D2 has one arm outfitted with a camera that can be maneuvered, and it has traditional round tires.
Burgeson said the robot received its name after Sgt. Scott Silvernail referred to it as “R2D2.” The name stuck.
Because the machine comes from the military, there are some drawbacks. For example, Burgeson said the operator’s manual is

still classified. However, an employee with the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation is familiar with the equipment and has offered to provide training to the Yankton Police Department free of charge.
One situation where R2D2 could have been of use was the Christmas Day stand-off in Vermillion last year where an armed suspect eventually shot and killed himself. Despite hearing a gunshot, law enforcement was not able to ascertain the condition of the suspect for hours.
“If we would have had this, we could have ended that situation sooner,” Burgeson said. “The outcome would have been the same, but we could have cleared the scene more quickly.”

Paulsen said the department hopes to take advantage of the 1033 Program more often in the future. Prior to attaining R2D2, he believes it had been years since the program had been utilized.
“1033 is a great program,” Paulsen stated. “We’re going to use it as much as we can to save tax dollars.”
Although some critics have raised concerns about domestic law enforcement increasingly using military equipment and techniques, Paulsen said he doesn’t see the Yankton Police Department as becoming more militarized.
“We don’t want to hide this type of thing from citizens,” he stated. “We want them to know

**“Yes, it’s a military piece of equipment, along with other things we have, but the bottom line is, these items are acquired for one purpose, and that is to save lives.”**

LT. MICHAEL BURGESON

pose, and that is to save lives. If you were looking at surveillance equipment or spy satellites, that’s a whole other thing. This is about saving money for our organization, and making our job safer and easier.”

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