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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **New Local Law Enforcement Officers Stay Close to Home** ***Law Enforcement Academy graduates join city, county departments***

**Eau Claire, WI** – Two new deputies with the Dunn County Sheriff's Department and a new Menomonie Police Department officer embarked on careers in law enforcement close to home.

Haley Vaagen, a 2016 Menomonie High School graduate and Lucas Kinblom, a 2016 Elk Mound High School graduate, have started duties with the Dunn County Sheriff's Department. Ben Otto, a 2008 Menomonie graduate is a new officer with the Menomonie PD.

Vaagen, Kinblom and Otto were among 22 graduates of the Chippewa Valley Technical College Law Enforcement Academy honored at an Oct. 4 graduation ceremony. They wore the uniform of the departments they will be serving with, as did 14 other graduates who had been hired by law enforcement agencies from Superior to Sheboygan County.

Completion of 60 hours of college credits is required to qualify for the Academy. Many go through CVTC's two-year Criminal Justice-Law Enforcement program, or through a university or other technical college.

CVTC Associate Dean of Emergency Services Eric Anderson said the 720-hour Academy instructs the recruits in six areas: policing in America, tactical skills, patrol procedures, legal context, relational skills and investigations. Completion of training at a Law Enforcement Academy is required to become certified as a law enforcement officer in Wisconsin. However, officers can start work with a department before completing the training.

Otto attended Daytona State College in Florida, then Ohio University, studying business administration and strategic leadership. He landed a job out west with JP Morgan Chase.

"I liked what I did, but I didn't love it," Otto said. "Law Enforcement is something that I've always wanted to do and having the opportunity to serve the community I grew up in is a dream come true."

Otto added that growing up playing sports and being part of that team environment is part of what attracted him to law enforcement. "Also being able to help the people in my community and having the chance to give back."

The Menomonie Police Department hired Otto in May and sponsored his attendance at the Academy.

Vaagen studied criminal justice at a Florida college for a year before enrolling in CVTC's program. The Sheriff's Department hired her in February and sponsored her enrollment in the Academy upon her May graduation.

"I'm a reserve deputy and had been doing events like the races on Friday nights and any of the fairs that happen in Dunn County," Vaagen said.

Vaagen said she became interested in law enforcement at a young age when she knew a female officer and looked up to her. "And I was a crisis responder for Oakland County (Florida) for a while, and got to see how law enforcement works. I knew it was for me."

Kinblom enrolled in CVTC's Criminal Justice-Law Enforcement program right after his graduation from Elk Mound High School. He was also hired in February and sponsored through the Academy by the Dunn County Sheriff's Department.

"Seeing all the different law enforcement officers in my community got me interested in law enforcement. It looked like a fun job that they really enjoyed, and I wanted to make a difference in my community," Kinblom said.

Kinblom even has an idea of what kind of partner he'd like in law enforcement work. "I'd like to get involved with a drug unit and doing narcotics work or, eventually working with a canine unit."

The speaker for the Academy graduation ceremony was William Gray, a special agent with the Wisconsin Department of Revenue. While working as a financial crimes investigator for the Chippewa County Sheriff's Department in November 2014 he was attacked and stabbed 14 times in the face, neck and hand.

Gray urged the graduates to stay close to the people who will help them in their careers. "When I first started with the Dunn County Sheriff's Office, I was a reserve," Gray said. "I sought out those people who would take me under their wing. I didn't go riding with them because I wanted to rub elbows or anything like that. I wanted to learn what my task was going to be."

With over 155 programs offered both online and on-campus, Chippewa Valley Technical College delivers superior, progressive technical education which improves the lives of students, meets the workforce needs of the region, and strengthens the community. CVTC programs are designed with input of business and industry to prepare graduates for today's jobs, with 95 percent employed within six months of graduation and associate degree graduates earning an average annual salary of \$46,816.

**Cutline:**

Three graduates of the CVTC Law Enforcement Academy are staying close to home to begin their careers, and they were joined by leaders from their new departments at the graduation ceremony Oct. 4 in Eau Claire. From left are new Menomonie Police Department officer Benjamin Otto, Menomonie Chief of Police Eric Atkinson, new Dunn County Sheriff's Department deputies Haley Vaagen and Lucas Kinblom, and Sheriff Kevin Bygd.

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