



## NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

Tyler Lecceadone, Seyferth PR  
616.776.3511

[Lecceadone@seyferthpr.com](mailto:Lecceadone@seyferthpr.com)

### **GERALD R. FORD PRESIDENTIAL FOUNDATION HONORS ONE OF GRAND RAPIDS POLICE DEPARTMENT'S FIRST MEDICAL TECHNICIANS DURING NATIONAL EMS WEEK**

*Bob Wildman Presented with 1974 proclamation signed by President Ford  
observing EMS Week*

**GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. – May 18, 2020** – In honor of National Emergency Medical Services Week, May 17-23, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation paid tribute to a retired Grand Rapids Police Department officer Bob Wildman, who was one of the first officers assigned to the department's E-Unit team in 1971, as a level three emergency medical technician. Wildman was honored for his dedicated service to the city of Grand Rapids during a virtual commemoration ceremony.

In 1974, President Gerald R. Ford signed a proclamation observing the work of the nation's Emergency Medical Services and the need to increase EMS services. During the virtual ceremony, Joseph Calvaruso, executive director of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation, presented a framed copy of the original 1974 proclamation to Wildman, which in part stated, "Each week more than a thousand Americans die as a result of accidents, heart attacks, and other medical crises because emergency medical assistance is not available."

"President Ford recognized the great lifesaving efforts of those who serve and protect, including police officers, EMTs and first responders," said Calvaruso. "We want to honor Mr. Wildman as one of the first law officers in the city of Grand Rapids who had a dual role as a medical technician. Thank you for your service, not only for your sacrifice and dedication as a patrol officer protecting our city, but also as a medic who served to save lives onsite of an incident."

Wildman was part of the first team of GRPD officers who were the city's first specially-trained medical technicians when the program launched. In addition to his role as a police officer, Wildman drove an E-Unit patrol car that was specifically outfitted with medical equipment in order to provide onsite medical care.

"I am honored to receive this special commemoration," said Wildman. "I accept it on behalf of all of us who served at that time to provide emergency services to the city of Grand Rapids."

The 46th annual National EMS Week runs May 17-23 to honor the dedication of those who provide the day-to-day lifesaving services of medicine's frontline. EMS Week falls on the third

week of May after having been moved from November to provide distinction between EMS and Fire Prevention Week.

Additionally, in 1976, President Ford Signed the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act, and at that time President Ford said, "We owe these dedicated public servants more than gratitude, more than praise. We owe them and their families the fullest measure of protection that we can provide them."

The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation's virtual commemoration honoring Wildman can be viewed, here:

***Editor's note:***

Clean video for all media usage is available at:

<https://youtu.be/HMODYI5SD-k>

A link to the original 1975 proclamation is available at: <https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0159/1670000.pdf>

**Attached Photos:**

Photo 1: Bob Wildman (far left). In 1975 Grand Rapids Police Department's E-Unit, as a first of its kind in the nation, was featured during a conference in Chicago.

Photo 2: Bob Wildman (far left), is photographed with the Grand Rapids Police Department's graduating class of cadets. Congressman Gerald Ford (center) spoke during the ceremony.

**About Gerald R. Ford Foundation**

The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation fosters increased awareness of the life, career, values, and legacy of America's 38<sup>th</sup> President. It does so through activities designed to promote the high ideals of integrity, honesty, and candor that defined President Ford's extraordinary career of public service. The Foundation promotes the ideas, values, commitment to public service and historical legacy of President Gerald R. Ford and further promotes greater civic engagement and recognition of integrity wherever it exists in the public arena. It supports permanent and changing exhibits designed to promote historical literacy; conferences; educational outreach and other programs, both scholarly and popular, including at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum.

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