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TUCSON POLICE CHIEF CHRIS MAGNUS  
TO RECEIVE LEADERSHIP AWARD FROM POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM

(October 20, 2020, Washington, D.C.) -- The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) has announced that it will present its 2020 Leadership Award to Tucson, AZ Chief of Police Chris Magnus.

PERF's Leadership Award is presented annually to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the field of law enforcement, and who exemplify the highest principles and standards of true leaders in policing on a national level. (In addition to Chief Magnus, two other people will receive the 2020 Leadership Award: Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo and Pinellas County, FL Sheriff Bob Gualtieri.)

During his time in Tucson, as well as his earlier service as police chief in Richmond, CA and Fargo, ND, Chief Magnus has created new programs that serve as models for police agencies across the country, such as the following:

**The importance of first-line supervisors:** Chief Magnus recognizes that sergeants play an important role in the daily work of policing. In Tucson, when police officers qualify for promotion to sergeant, they are sent to a 40-hour Sergeants Academy *before they are promoted*. Each day of this training begins with lessons on leadership, team-building, and tactical leadership. The training consists mostly of scenario-based exercises, where aspiring sergeants demonstrate how they would handle incidents such as a suicide-by-cop situation, an unruly person at a bar, a hit-and-run traffic incident with a fleeing suspect, etc.

Tucson police lieutenants and sergeants evaluate the aspiring sergeants' performance in the scenarios, discussing what went well and what needs improvement. This program is innovative in another way: The Sergeants Academy invites community members to volunteer to do role-playing in the scenario training exercises. A cadre of 30 community members regularly participate. This provides an additional benefit of giving community members insight into the work of policing. This program was detailed in a 2018 [PERF report](#).

**Police accountability and reform:** In 2020, Chief Magnus launched a new process for evaluating critical incidents called the *Sentinel Event Review Board*. This Board is designed to conduct a process similar to the National Transportation Safety Board's review of transportation accidents. Its goal is not to consider criminal charges or assign blame to individuals, but rather to

identify underlying systemic weaknesses in policies, training, or practices. The Board recently released its first report, which identified 32 contributing factors that led to the deaths of two men in Tucson police custody.

**Officer wellness:** Chief Magnus has been a forward-thinking leader on issues that are beginning to receive widespread national attention. While Chief in Fargo more than 15 years ago, Magnus created a Peer Assistance Counseling Team to provide critical incident stress debriefing and peer counseling to officers. Chief Magnus understands the value of people and the need to provide them support and services to thrive.

“Despite his many groundbreaking achievements, Chris is kind and humble,” said Retired Police Chief Fred Fletcher, who nominated Magnus for the Leadership Award. “He has an unshakeable inner strength, deep compassion, and unwavering moral compass, and he never hesitates to promote what’s right or to call out what’s wrong, even when it would be easier to avoid those conversations. He considers honest conversations about difficult topics essential to his role as police chief.”

PERF Executive Director Chuck Wexler noted that Chief Magnus’s leadership in Richmond, CA was critically important to that city. “Chris took a department that had strained relations with the community and rebuilt it as a model for community engagement. He also focused like a laser on crime rates, establishing a COMPSTAT-style model that contributed to a drop in homicides, from 49 in 2007 to 11 in 2014. Richmond has a significantly different police department today than when Chris started there. He showed with can be done with leadership and determination.”

The Leadership Award will be presented to Chief Magnus at PERF’s Virtual Town Hall Meeting on October 20. The Award has been presented every year since 1984. Recent recipients include retired Denver Police Chief Robert White; former Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck; former Seattle Police Chief Kathleen O’Toole; and Chicago Police Superintendent David Brown.

The Police Executive Research Forum is a Washington, D.C.-based national organization of executives from city, county and state law enforcement agencies; federal agency officials; academics; and others with an interest in criminal justice issues. PERF is dedicated to improving policing and advancing professionalism through research and involvement in public policy debate. For additional information, go to [www.policeforum.org](http://www.policeforum.org).

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