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Officer lauded for record of service to community

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January 29, 2009

By **MATT HANLEY** mhanley@scn1.com

It's not often that you can catch Jesse Torres off guard.

But the Aurora police officer and longtime boxer was shocked when he found out he had been chosen as this year's recipient of the Pete Perez Community Service Award.

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"I didn't ever expect it," he said. "I had no idea. It's a surprise to me that I have so many followers in the community."

Torres started his boxing club in 1996. For more than a decade aspiring boxers have trained at the non-profit Jesse "The Law" Torres Boxing Club and Drop In Youth Center at 517 N. Union St.

Torres will be honored this morning at Aurora's Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board's annual community breakfast at Long Island Sound Banquets, 1920 E. New York St. He will be the recipient of the award which is named after Pete Perez, the former Aurora and Kane County law enforcement officer, Chicago Bears player and father of present Kane County Sheriff Pat Perez.

The Peter J. Perez Award has been handed out since 2001. Past recipients include Mary Rudnicki, a social worker who helped establish Aunt Martha's Healthy Kids Clinic; and the Rev. David Engbarth, former pastor at St. Nicholas Catholic Church in Aurora and present pastor at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in Aurora.

Besides the Pete Perez Award, four area high school students and four college students will receive scholarships for their leadership and community service this morning. The guest speaker will be Robert Renteria, author of "From the Barrio to the Board Room," speaking about overcoming obstacles to accomplish dreams.

Torres has had a distinguished police career. He was named the Aurora police officer of the year in 1993 for talking a person out of suicide and getting him to surrender his gun. But he is probably more well-known for his boxing club.

Torres has been an Aurora police officer for 22 years and boxing for 34 years.

Besides working his regular shift, Torres also keeps the boxing club open Monday through Thursday from 5 to 8 p.m. Torres said he has about 30 regular boxers, but many days he has 70 come in.

"I'm a simple person. I don't ask much from my boxers," he said. "The doors are open to take advantage of the program. You come when you want to come, you follow the rules, then the doors will be open to you."



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