While being vigilant in her position as a campus police officer at Utah State University Eastern, Tana Christensen did admit to being caught off-guard on the night of Jan. 23, at the Bunnell-Dmitrich Athletic Center.

During halftime of USU Eastern’s 67-61 victory over the College of Southern Idaho, Christensen was presented with the school’s annual “Community Member of the Year” award.

“I was really surprised,” Christensen said of the honor. “My husband knew about it, but I didn’t find out about it until they actually gave me the award.

“I don’t like to be the center of attention, but it was really nice, and I was speechless and caught off-guard.”

A native of Emery County, Christensen graduated with an associate degree in criminal justice in 2004 and then spent a couple of years working for the CEU police department before serving elsewhere. Christensen was working in another department on the USUE campus in 2015 when she was approached by a supervisor about serving full-time as a law enforcement officer.

“Tana Christensen is a tremendous asset to our campus and to campus athletics,” said Greg Dart, associate vice president at USU Eastern. “She is the first to volunteer and help whenever it is needed, and she goes above and beyond the call of duty.

“Without Tana’s help, we would not be nearly as successful as we are.”

The nomination for Christensen’s award stated that the veteran police officer, “…goes above and beyond for people. To her, it is just part of her job, and she feels like she can make a difference by being an extra set of eyes, watching out for students and helping them be safe while away from home.”

USUE Student Body President Bryce Gingery can certainly attest to that, having received attention and care from Christensen during and after a serious medical episode.

“Officer Christensen is one to always care and go the extra mile. When I had my stroke, she was there from the time it started all the way to when I got discharged. She never left, even after her shift ended,” Gingery said. “Officer Christensen continually checked up on me days and even weeks after the stroke to make sure I was OK. When I was at my lowest and 800 miles from home with no family around, she made sure I had someone be with.”

Of course, for Christensen, looking out for students, faculty and staff at USU Eastern is like taking care of her own family.

“With this small of a campus, it’s like working with family,” Christensen said. “You actually do more proactive police work instead of reactive. I can get out and teach before the bad stuff happens.”

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