Ben 'Yeti' Rhodes receives top honor from S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame

Award is the namesake of Richland County (South Carolina) Sheriff Leon Lott



Pictured L-R Sheriff Leon Lott, Black Belt Hall of Famer Bruce Brutschy, and award recipient Ben Rhodes, Sept. 17, 2026.

COLUMBIA, SC, UNITED STATES, September 24, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Martial arts practitioner and acclaimed instructor for U.S. and foreign special operations forces Ben “Yeti” Rhodes was awarded the S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame’s prestigious “LEON LOTT – FIRST THROUGH THE DOOR” AWARD,” during a private ceremony at Richland County Sheriff's Department headquarters, Thursday, Sept. 17.

Rhodes, a former police officer, SWAT team leader, and veteran of the U.S. Navy’s special warfare boat teams (in support of U.S. Navy SEALs) has for years trained and/or deployed overseas with U.S. and foreign special operations forces including SEALs, Air Force pararescuemen, Marine Force Reconnaissance teams, British SAS operators and the Israel Defense Force. He has also provided VIP protection for U.S. ambassadors and served as subject matter expert (counterterrorism and antiterrorism) for the U.S. State Department.

“Ben is uniquely deserving of this award which is the namesake of the 2021 National Sheriff of the Year Leon Lott,” said 10th-degree Black Belt Bruce Brutschy, a S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame inductee (Class of 2013). “His story reads like any of the most celebrated world adventurers or as some have referred to him 'a modern Samurai.'"

Brutschy adds: “If nothing else, the man can bench press 625 lbs.”

The award bears the name of Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott, who together with Brutschy, Black Belt Hall of Famer Ray Thompson (also a 10th degree black belt), and Corporal Gerard

Brown (a 4th-degree Jiu-Jitsu instructor with the City of Columbia Police Department), formally made the presentation.

“The S.C. Black Belt Hall of Fame is an esteemed body of martial artists and personal friends who I am proud to be associated with,” said Sheriff Lott moments prior to the presentation. “I’m humbled to have my name on this award. I’m even more humbled to be able to present it to you [Rhodes].”

Rhodes holds a black belt in several martial arts disciplines including Judo and Thai boxing, and he holds a 4th degree black belt in Gracie Jiu-Jitsu: A form of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu that prioritizes leverage, energy efficiency, and real-world combat over sport fighting.

Special Deputy W. Thomas Smith Jr.
Richland County Sheriff's Department
email us here



The official South Carolina Black Belt Hall of Fame emblem and blazer patch.



Headquartered in Columbia, S.C., the Richland County Sheriff's Department is the largest sheriff's department in the Palmetto State and regarded as one of the premier law enforcement agencies in the U.S.

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/944875621

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.
© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.