

The spring ceremony's keynote address will be delivered by Tennessee State Parks Chief Ranger and Bethel University College of Professional Studies alum Shane Petty.

Petty holds a Master of Criminal Justice degree from Bethel and is a graduate of the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. Petty earned undergraduate degrees at Columbia State Community College (CSCC) and Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Petty began his career with Tennessee State Parks in 1987 as a seasonal ranger and became a full-time ranger at Henry Horton State Park in 1989.

In 1993, he was named assistant chief for law enforcement for the state system and was promoted to chief ranger in 1997—a role he has served for 25 years.

Petty is responsible for hiring, training and procurement for 244 commissioned rangers spread across all 56 of Tennessee's state parks.

He is the Emergency Services Coordinator for Tennessee State Parks where he is responsible for the safety and security for 30 million visitors annually. In this role, Petty oversees all special operations divisions such as horse mounted, search and rescue, wildland fire response, high angle rope rescue and the K-9 division.

In addition to his professional duties, Petty is a volunteer Captain with Maury County Emergency Management Agency where he lends K-9 assistance, an adjunct instructor for the Tennessee Law Enforcement Academy (TLEA), Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Academy (TBIA), Tennessee Highway Patrol (THP), Tennessee Emergency Management Association (TEMA) and the Tennessee National Guard. He is also a licensed A-EMT with Tennessee State Parks.

Petty has earned many career accolades including the 2004 Fraternal Order of Police Law Officer Achievement Award for his 5-day manhunt and capture of murder suspect Parker Ray Elliott in Maury County; In 2006 he was named CSCC Alumni of the Year; in 2017 Gov. Bill Haslam recognized a Day of Honor for Petty's lifetime achievements in search and rescue; In 2019 First Farmers Merchant Bank honored him with its Achievement Award.