

SOLID GOLD WINNER - 2015

Deputy John Knecht

Ottawa County Sheriff's Office

On February 16, 2015 at approximately 0127 hours Deputy John Knecht received a 9-1-1 call that appeared at first to be an open line or misdial. Deputy Knecht stated, "Ottawa County 911" twice but received no answer. He continued to monitor the call because he knew that the line could have been purposely left open. Deputy Knecht said nothing else so he could not be detected.

He heard what he thought was a female in distress. He also heard a male subject repeatedly say, "Keep driving." Using the mapping system to track the vehicle's location, he continued to monitor the call. He then relayed what he was hearing to the other dispatcher on duty. That dispatcher was able to inform and continually update patrol deputies about the open line and the vehicle's current location. Deputy Knecht was able to accomplish this without anyone in the vehicle hearing his voice or being aware that he was still on the line.

Another area police department was monitoring radio traffic and quickly realized this was the suspect vehicle involved in an abduction case they had just received. They were able to give a description and all patrol deputies were updated.

Patrol deputies were able to locate the vehicle shortly thereafter and attempted to make a stop. The vehicle would not stop and a pursuit ensued. During the pursuit, Deputy Knecht could hear what sounded to be the male subject assaulting the female and telling her not to stop. This information was immediately relayed to the deputies.

While continuing to monitor both the open line and the location of the vehicle, Deputy Knecht was able to coordinate other agencies and a K-9 unit. Dispatch also assisted the pursuing officers in locating a safe area to deploy Stop Sticks in an attempt to stop the fleeing vehicle. Deputy Knecht informed adjacent agencies of the pursuit as the vehicle was traveling toward another jurisdiction. While this was being done, Deputy Knecht continued to answer other incoming 9-1-1 and non-emergency calls.

After the stop sticks were deployed and failed, the female driver was able to slow the vehicle enough to jump to safety while still moving. It was at this time that the suspect moved to the driver's seat and led deputies on a pursuit reaching eighty miles per hour. Deputy Knecht continued to keep the line open so that he could map the subject's location.

The vehicle was eventually stopped in a neighboring county and the suspect was apprehended, due in large part to the excellent performance of Deputy Knecht. The female subject was treated for minor injuries.

It was later learned that the female was a patron at a local gas station where she was asked for a ride to the hospital by the suspect. The female agreed but was soon assaulted and abducted by the male. He

demanded that she drive him to another location. The victim was able to call 9-1-1 undetected and throw her phone in the floor.

Deputy Knecht could have easily dismissed this call as a “pocket dial” but instead used his knowledge, experience, and intuition to remain on the line. He was careful to be discrete on the phone so that the suspect did not know he was listening. While quickly forwarding information to patrol officers he was able to piece together what was happening.

Deputy Knecht displayed great professionalism in taking immediate command of the call, relaying pertinent information and coordinating efforts of all local agencies. His knowledge of the available equipment and procedures helped to quickly locate the vehicle and bring the incident to a peaceful end.

DOUBLE GOLD WINNER 2015

Mansfield Public Safety Communications Center

On April 27, 2015 a call for service came in that is rare for its time of day, 8:28am, the very serious Man With a Gun. A representative from Columbia Gas had attempted to go to the door of 36 Randall Rd to advise the resident he had to shut off gas service to the house. Before getting to the door the resident charged the utility worker with an assault rifle. The utility worker was able to retreat to his vehicle and call 9-1-1.

The 9-1-1 call was taken by 22 year veteran dispatcher Lisa Abrams and dispatched by 26 year veteran dispatcher LeWanda Jefferson. Both showed how truly gifted they are at their craft. Lisa was able calmly obtain critical details on the suspect, advise the caller on the response to be expected and how to stay safe. LeWanda dispatched a response based on protocol and had outstanding room awareness listening to the call taker and relaying pertinent information in real time. As officers on scene quickly arrived, the role of the telecommunicator would prove critical.

Mansfield Police Department patrol officers arrived on scene quickly and realized how volatile the situation had turned. Neighbors were contacted and were advised of the situation and were able to provide critical information on the suspect. After several attempts, it was apparent the suspect would not cooperate with officers on scene ultimately resulting in a barricaded suspect and a SWAT callout. Telecommunicators were then assigned the responsibility of calling into action the SWAT Team and notifying several other agencies of the situation. Some the agencies contacted were the Mansfield Fire Department, the City of Mansfield Street Department, adjacent LEA including the Lexington Police Department, Richland County Sheriff's Office, Ontario Police Department, Ashland County Sheriff's Office and the Ohio State Highway Patrol. Other locations had to be advised and prepared as well,

including a nearby middle school and several private businesses that would serve as command posts or in many other ways.

As the event went on, so did the shifts at the PSCC. Second shift dispatchers Valerie Voelp, Collin Shaum, and Rebecca Buhler would arrange for the Ohio State Highway Patrol SRT team to stage and relieve our local SWAT team. Telecommunicators would calm the nerves of neighbors who took seriously the order of police to stay inside their residences. One neighbor was concerned that her pets had not been outside all day, and dispatch arranged for an officer to stand by while the pets were finally allowed out for the first time in nearly 12 hours. Night shift dispatchers Evelyn Saunders, Lee Robinson, and Vickie Thompson would come to work and seamlessly take over the task of logging the event and arrange the breaks for the SWAT and patrol officers working the scene. These telecommunicators were quick to make sure food and water was provided on scene for their brothers in sisters in need.

Over the next 26 hours the telecommunicators would log and communicate several pieces of critical information. The CAD printout is 10 pages long, the narrative has an impressive 151 lines of information, and the radio log has data entered nearly every minute. Telecommunicators made nearly 100 outgoing phone calls related to the event, including calls to the suspect on 15 minute intervals at the direction of the SWAT Commander. Furthermore, the telecommunicators handled all logistics relating to the event, specifically road blocks, rerouting of local school bussing and the hand off of several calls for service to our friends at our neighboring law enforcement agencies. These tasks continued for 26 hours until the suspect was ultimately taken down. The suspect was rushed to our local hospital by the Mansfield Fire Department, a call for service that was also handled by these telecommunicators.

During this event, it's important to reiterate the coverage was handled by all three shifts of telecommunicators in the Public Safety Communications Center and continued into the next day to be handled by the original shift. The list of all staff involved is listed below for your consideration. Though the time from call for service until the scene was deemed secure was just over the 26 hours, several events handled in the days and weeks to come were also logged and handled professionally by the telecommunicators relating to the investigation. It is also worth mentioning; the Richland County Sheriff's Office and the Mansfield Post of the Ohio State Highway Patrol dispatch centers were outstanding and showed the utmost professionalism during our time of need.

Jerry Botdorf, Operations Supervisor; Suzanne Meister, Telecommunicator; LeWanda Jefferson, Telecommunicator; Lisa Abrams, Telecommunicator; Valerie Voelp, Telecommunicator; Collin Shaum, Telecommunicator; Rebecca Buhler, Telecommunicator; Evelyn Saunders, Telecommunicator; Lee Robinson, Telecommunicator; Vickie Thompson, Telecommunicator

SOLID GOLD NOMINEES 2015

Lt. Tami Wass - Metropolitan Emergency Communications Center (MECC)

Tiffanie Brown - Kent Police Department

Alyson Ondrejka - Lucas County Sheriff's Office

Sarah Kessler - Grove City Police

John Knecht - Ottawa County Sheriff's Office

Rhonda Eck – Ohio State Highway Patrol Findlay Post

Kari Root – Ohio State Highway Patrol Springfield Post

William Courtright – Ohio State Highway Patrol New Philadelphia Post

Bambi Branchfield - Xenia-Greene Central Communications Center

Ryan Harper - Xenia-Greene Central Communications Center

Patty Craven - Hamilton County Communications Center

DOUBLE GOLD NOMINEES 2015

Xenia-Greene Central Communications Center – Heather Walden & Tara Melvin

Mansfield Division of Police – Jerry Botdorf, Suzanne Meister, LeWanda Jefferson, Lisa Abrams, Valerie Voelp, Collin Shaum, Rebecca Buhler, Evelyn Saunders, Lee Robinson, Vickie Thompson

Knox County Sheriff's Office – Bethani Neighbarger, Jenny Sheriff, Nicole Crabtree, Mark Haver

Muskingum County Sheriff's Office – Jeremy Yarger, Stacy Brokaw, Mike Dodd, Wes Kelly, Jennifer Davis

Ohio State Highway Patrol Canton Post – Denise Simon & Amanda Hermann

Ohio State Highway Patrol Columbus Post – Marion Stout, Sharon Collins, Christa Jamison

Ohio State Highway Patrol St Clairsville Post – Melissa Rath & Tracy Jaskowiak

Ohio State Highway Patrol New Philadelphia Post – Kevin Yoder, Katrina Katerberg, Elizabeth Worrell, Sarah Morgan, Rebecca Canavan

Ohio State Highway Patrol New Philadelphia Post – Elizabeth Worrell & Katrina Katerberg

Ohio State Highway Patrol Piqua Post – Jennifer Holmes & Ashley Thomas

Xenia-Greene Central Communications Center – Kim Barlow & Connie Miller

Pickerington Police Department – Kathleen Giblin & Jennie Barker

Hardin County Sheriff's Office – Tim McMillion & Luke Heilman

Ohio State University Department of Public Safety – Scott Beck & Pamela Murphy

Putnam County Sheriff's Office – Nancy Hovest & Todd Worchuk

Stark County Sheriff's Office – Jamie Wood, Patrick Arnold, Megan Hoskin, Patricia Harper-Mutlaq, Kristen Jones, Holly Paul

Butler County Sheriff's Office – Angela Mondelo, Susan Sherwin, Kay Metsker, Jennifer Ferneding,

Franklin County Sheriff's Office – Tonia Snider, Heather Barrett, Danielle McCown, Suzannah Baggett

GOLD STAR CERTIFICATES 2015

Ohio State Highway Patrol Medina Post – Ashley Jordan

Lucas County Sheriff's Office – Kelly Tardich

Northwood Police Department – Amy Stribrny

Muskingum County Sheriff's Office – Stacy Brokaw

Ohio State Highway Patrol Bucyrus – Christopher Baker

Ohio State Highway Patrol New Philadelphia – Lori Stine

Ohio State Highway Patrol Warren – Nicholas Johnson

Ohio State Highway Patrol Canfield – Cheryl Smith

Ohio State Highway Patrol Lancaster – Ernest King

Ohio State Highway Patrol Bucyrus – Dorothy Ettel

Ohio State Highway Patrol Columbus – Carrie Breech