



2021 Solid Gold Award Nominee

Lori Harris

Hamilton County Communications Center

NOMINATED BY:

ANDREW KNAPP

Hamilton County Communications Center nominates Communications Officer Lori Harris. Lori has been a part of HCCC for almost 26 years. During this time, she has served the agency in a variety of roles including trainer. She has worked primarily the night shift and almost her entire career. Please see the below nomination written by her supervisor, James Hembree.

When I think about an individual for their exemplary handling of a phone call and the ability of this individual to always go above and beyond on any call they get, I think of Lori Harris. Listening to Lori taking phone calls, is like listening to my own mother. She has a way of talking to callers that makes them feel better. That they are being taken care of and they are actually being listened too. I can't say that every call is amazing, we all have bad days, but I will say that every call is handled with the upmost professionalism.

Example: On November 18th HCCC stated getting disconnected phone calls from a cell phone. Every call was covered in static and sounded no different from any other technical misdial. That was until Lori got the call. Lori answered the call and once again it was covered in static just like every previous one. Lori however was able to hear just enough to know that someone was on the other end of that call and needed help. Her years of service and her overall professionalism shined with this incident. She used all her call taking tricks in her bag from GPS, Rapid SOS, text, and even subscriber information. Units were first dispatched using WPH2 with no contact. Lori then started asking questions and having the caller use key prompts to answer yes and no questions. A second dispatch was sent with information from the key prompts, but still no patient was located. Ultimately Lori was able to get a number for a neighbor and after calling them, she was able to get the correct address. EMS was sent and the patient was treated at the scene. This incident took 55 minutes from the first static call till EMS arrived. Through Lori's dedication to helping the people of Hamilton County, another life was saved."

I'm proud to nominate Communications Officer Lori Harris on behalf of the Hamilton County Communications Center.





2021 Solid Gold Award Nominee

Julie Salnajs
City of Strongsville (Southwest Emergency Dispatch)

NOMINATED BY:

ASHLEY FLYNN

While on shift and working next to dispatcher Salnajs I started choking on my dinner. Dispatcher Salnajs immediately jumped into action and started to perform the Heimlich maneuver. After multiple blows dispatcher Salnajs was able to dislodge the food. I want to nominate dispatcher Salnajs for her quick response to render aide to a dispatcher in need.





2021 Solid Gold Award Nominee

Delbert Duke
Ohio State Highway Patrol

NOMINATED BY:
CHARLES O'BRYON

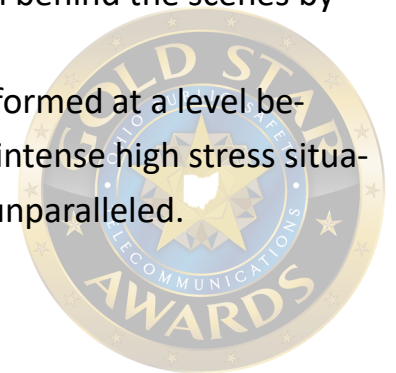
On March 23, 2021, at 0219 hours, Dispatcher Delbert (Dale) Duke, from the Wilmington Dispatch Center, was dispatching for a trooper involved in a motor vehicle and foot pursuit in Highland County, Ohio. The vehicle initially failed to stop for the trooper and fled into a nearby cornfield and then into an unknown area of dense woodlands. Dispatcher Duke was swift with his communications and immediately contacted the Highland County Sheriff's Office to coordinate efforts to set up perimeters and/or assist with the man-hunt.

Dispatcher Duke also took it upon himself to contact the Highway Patrol Critical Incident and Information Center for aviation assets to respond to the scene to assist with local efforts. He started collecting relevant information being relayed to him and provided this information to local agencies to collaborate efforts in the apprehension of the suspect.

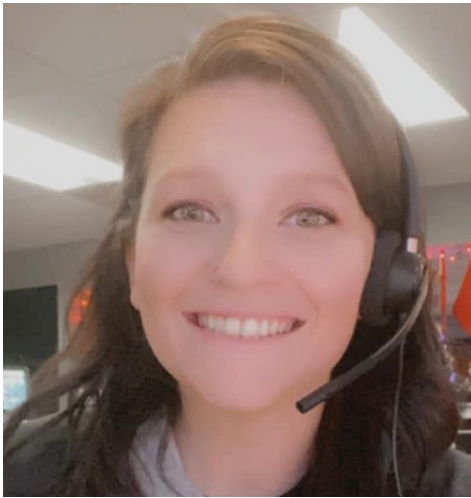
Dispatcher Duke was able to obtain the identity of the suspect who fled on foot through his training and experience as a dispatcher. He recognized available resources at hand and utilized them to his advantage to help assist the units on scene with their efforts and ultimately identifying the suspected driver.

Dispatcher Dukes actions were a large component leading to the apprehension of this individual. Due to his quick response and coordination of a multi-jurisdictional agency response officers were able to locate the suspect hiding in the woods. Officers were able to tactfully and safely take the suspect into custody without further incident, because of the actions taken behind the scenes by Dispatcher Duke.

This was just one of several instances where Dispatcher Dale Duke has performed at a level befitting a Gold Star award. Dispatcher Duke has always been reliable during intense high stress situations. His knowledge and expertise of dispatching and CAD entry remains unparalleled.



2021 Solid Gold Award Nominee



Amy Byrd
Regional Emergency Dispatch Center (RED Center)

NOMINATED BY:
CODY POST

On February 24th, 2021, Dispatcher Amy Byrd received a phone call on the non-emergency lines for the Regional Emergency Dispatch Center. Tuscarawas County transferred a caller who was reporting a house fire. The caller's 18-year-old son was trapped in the basement. It was later determined that the basement is where the fire started. Seconds ticked by as Amy entered the location of the fire into the CAD. She also toned the Erie Valley Fire Department. The caller remained on the line. Amy asked critical questions about the potential location of the victim. She asked if there was a window that he could be near. She knew that if the caller's son could be saved, this information is priceless.

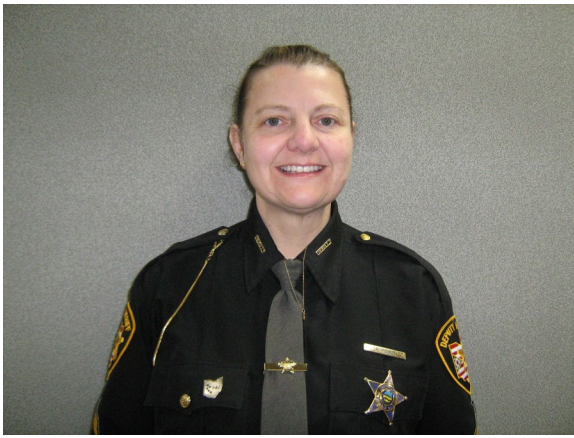
While Amy tried to keep the mother calm, she relayed all of the information she gathered to the Fire Chief, responding from 11 miles away. The Fire Chief was able to see the fire from the center of town. He gave the dispatcher orders to tone and re-tone his department and many more for mutual aid. Amy completed the task and many more with the assistance of her fellow dispatchers. At one point, Amy was simultaneously alerting four nearby departments to respond to the fire while the others called for resources from nearby Tuscarawas county. It took the Fire Chief 8 minutes to arrive on the scene and the first Fire Engine just under 14 minutes. The entire time Amy is kept the caller on the phone and kept her calm. Amy reassured her that help was on the way, even as the minutes ticked by and the fire grew in intensity.

The house eventually was consumed by fire and collapsed. The caller transitioned into despair when she realized that her son was likely dead. The following day, the fire department would find her son's body near the basement stairs, where he was trying to escape the fire.

Because of many factors, it was unlikely that the victim would have been saved. Amy didn't know this at the time. The questions she asked, the speed that she moved to get the departments to the scene, and her ability to keep the caller calm would have saved this man's life had just a few circumstances been different about the fire.

It was best said by the Navarre-Bethlehem Joint Fire District Board "Your efforts describe what true public servants exemplify"





2021 Solid Gold Award Nominee

Deputy Karrie Houtz
Wood County Sheriff's Office

NOMINATED BY:
DOUG HOUTZ

On March 4, 2021 at 11:21 pm, Deputy Karrie Houtz answered a call for help from a female reporting that her friend was unresponsive and drank too much alcohol. As Deputy Houtz began EMD, the female caller became very upset as her friend was possibly not breathing. Deputy Houtz tried to keep the females calm as she attempted to guide them through CPR instructions. As Karrie gave instructions to the caller, the friends in the background became upset and Deputy Houtz had them leave the room but never gave up on CPR. Help showed up shortly thereafter to help the victim, but he later passed at the hospital a few days after.





2021 Solid Gold Award Nominee

Deputy Britaney Szymanski
Wood County Sheriff's Office

NOMINATED BY:

DOUG HOUTZ

On 9/10/2021 at 9:36 pm, Deputy Szymanski received a non emergency call for a welfare check on the caller's neighbor advising her that he had put a letter in his wife's bag at work that he was going to kill himself. Caller further advises that the subject may have a gun.

Soon after at 9:41 pm, Deputy Szymanski receives a 9-1-1 call from the residence of the welfare check stating she is worried about her ex-husband. Deputy Szymanski gathers as much information as possible while telling her to keep an eye on him at a distance.

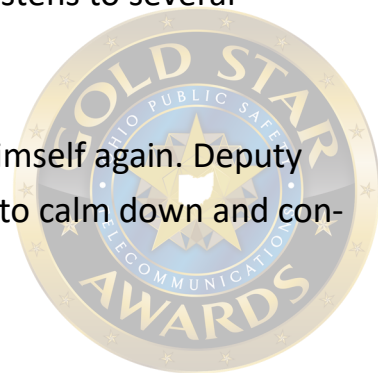
After a few more questions, the caller begins to scream as Deputy Szymanski attempts to regain control of the call... the male had shot himself.

While speaking to the caller, Deputy Szymanski listens to the caller to obtain further information while the male moans in the background.

As the caller begs for help, Deputy Szymanski stays calm and continues to attempt EMD instructions. The caller and victim can be heard.

As Deputy Szymanski tries to obtain the whereabouts of the weapon, she listens to several minutes of the frantic caller.

When the caller tries to get attention of the responders, the male shoots himself again. Deputy Szymanski did an great job of staying calm and gets the caller to step away to calm down and continues to try and keep her calm for a little under 15 minutes.





2021 Solid Gold Award Nominee

Audrey Briggs
Whitehall Police Department

NOMINATED BY:
KELLIE MCKINLEY

On Wednesday October 27th, 2021 at 6:13pm, Dispatcher Audrey Briggs took a call from citizen who was encountering a mental health crisis. The caller, whose history was known to police, is a veteran who has suffered from PTSD and alcoholism. During this call the citizen was upset and intoxicated and needed to speak to someone. She kept him on the phone until officers arrived, speaking to him about his service in the military, his cat, his family and shared some personal antidotes about herself. Dispatcher Briggs demonstrated excellence by providing compassionate service to the citizen, demonstrating the core values of our agency.





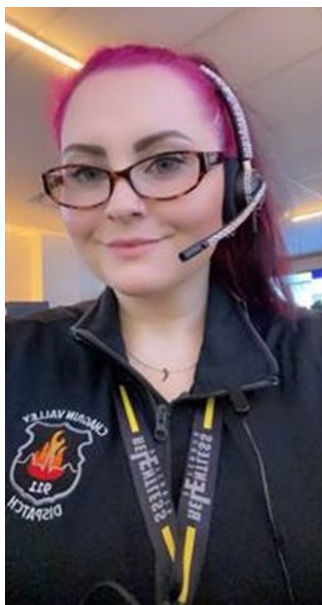
2021 Solid Gold Award Nominee

Michelle Kocsis
City of Akron Safety Communications

NOMINATED BY:
STACEY STANAR

On October 26, 2021 at 0805 hours, Michelle received a 911 call from a cellphone. The caller was unable to speak, and the location pinged at an intersection that was not residential. Over the course of 32 minutes, Michelle worked with the caller through her asking questions and the caller pushing buttons to answer, to find her location, She was at 1180 Rentar Ln, in a highrise. Michelle was able to figure out which apartment she was in and guide the paramedics to the caller. The caller had multiple seizures on the way to the hospital, and without Michelle's perseverance, there is no doubt that the outcome would have been different for the caller.





2021 Solid Gold Award Winner

Tiffany Ward

Chagrin Valley Dispatch - Bedford

On June 29, 2021 a call came into the Chagrin Valley Dispatch Center - Bedford Location - from a female who stated that her husband was severely intoxicated and had a gun to his head threatening to take his own life. Knowing the severity of the situation, Dispatcher Tiffany Ward immediately broadcasted the information to the responders on the road. The caller stated that while her husband had not been formally diagnosed with any mental health disorders, he had been depressed for years. At that time, no direct threats had been made towards the caller, however she soon received a text message from her husband stating if she "called the police, bad things would happen". The female on the line then tried to unlock the doors digitally from her cell phone, but they were almost immediately relocked by her husband from the other room.

It was determined that the female was not able to exit the home without passing by her husband and Dispatcher Ward couldn't risk the female safety by trying to have her make a run for it. So, Dispatcher Ward stayed on the phone with the female caller, researching as much as she could about the husband for the responders, all the while, trying to keep this female as calm as possible. At the same time, the SWAT team and the Hostage Negotiation team had been activated to assist in the rescue of the caller.

The male became rather agitated and began sending her text messages to confirm that she did not call the police, it was at that time that Dispatcher Ward advised the caller to hit buttons on her phone in the event that he came into the room. All of the shades were drawn in the home which made it impossible for officers to see inside of the home to establish a plan. At that time, it was up to Dispatcher Ward to get a layout of the home to relay to the officers on the outside. With her quick thinking, Dispatcher Ward opened up pictures of the home on Zillow.com and she began confirming with the woman on the other end of the phone the various layouts of each room of the home.

50 minutes after the start of the phone call, the caller advised Dispatcher Ward that she could no longer hear her husband moving around. The caller was able to peek into the room where her husband was, and saw that he had fallen asleep. While reassuring, the danger was not over as he still had the gun resting on his right temple. It was then that the female advised Dispatcher Ward that she could now probably make it out of the back door, leaving it open for officers to make their entrance. After clearing it with the Officer in Charge, Dispatcher Ward told the woman to "GO". The caller made a run for it, and was able to safely make it out of the back door into the arms of a waiting officer who ushered her to safety. Her husband was then taken into custody where he was transported to the hospital for a psychological evaluation prior to being booked into the local jail.

Dispatcher Ward was the reason that both this female and this male are alive today. With her patience, compassion, and quick thinking – she was able to calm her caller as well as provide useful information to the responding officers. Dispatcher Ward's handling of this call is an textbook example of the requirements of the Solid Gold Star Award.

