ECO Julia Perez



The obvious nomination for Communications Officer of the Month for June could possibly go to a rock star call taker who fielded a call from a man threatening to commit suicide. He was at the end of his rope and threatening to jump off the Shockoe Valley Bridge to end his life. The call taker talked him down, reminding him that he had people in his life who needed him. (CAD #F02106050049). Or, perhaps it could go to a call taker who took a call from an frantic male who had accidentally shot himself in the head when his gun miss-fired. (CAD202106040373). This call taker was able to keep her composure to calm the victim enough to attain the information needed to get emergency services to his location. Both are examples of actual 911 calls received early in the month of June, an either one of these calls would provide a great basis for ECO of the Month Nominations.

The actual nomination goes to someone behind the scenes, who is there after the phone call is over. Both of these call takers did a great job in difficult circumstances, but both were also left visibly upset by the situations they had just guided the victims through. In steps this month's nominee, Julia Perez.

ECO Perez has been an employee with the Department of Emergency Communications since September 26, 2011. Her contributions have been invaluable as she assist on a daily basis with translation for Hispanic callers when language lines are not available. She just recently conducted roll call presenting to the platoon, translation of frequently used Spanish phrases.

In June of 2020, ECO Perez made the decision to advance her career and submitted a DEC-14 expressing interest in becoming a member of the department's CISM team and in October 2020, she completed her training. This month she would put her training to good use, providing support to her co-workers who were obviously experiencing some emotions from the calls they had taken. For two consecutive days, ECO Perez was the epitome of the expression, "Team behind the scene". As her co-workers handled intense calls, both employees were visibly upset by what they had experienced. ECO Perez's training had prepared her for the interaction needed to ensure the healthy processing of these incidents. On June 4, 2021, she talked with one ECO who expressed that the call she took triggered memories of a personal experience. After talking with her for a while, ECO Perez provided her cell number so that the ECO could discretely text her if she found that during the shift (or after), she needed to talk again. On June 5, 2021, another ECO found herself pleading with a possible jumper on the Shockoe Valley Bridge to move away from the railing, allowing officers the time needed to locate him and resolve the situation without further incident. After releasing the call, the ECO asked for a break so she could walk and clear her head. When she returned, ECO Perez was there to talk and assist with processing the incident. After talking with ECO Perez the call taker requested to return to her position and continue to take calls for service.

There is not a doubt in my mind that having ECO Perez here on that day helped our ECO's to process their experiences and to decide that they were able to continue in their duties. Having ECO Perez here fully trained to aid and support our team members in these specific types of situations is the true definition of "Team behind the Scenes".