

## Saginaw County Red Cross preparing to honor "Everyday Heroes"

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Saginaw County Central Dispatch worker Kimberly Muskeyvalley's voice calmed a pregnant Darcie Kennedy when two men broke into her boyfriend's Saginaw house in August.

The women will meet Thursday at an annual Red Cross awards ceremony for "Everyday Heroes" at Horizons Conference Center in Saginaw Township.

"I am so excited to have her meet me and my daughter, so she can see what she helped," said Kennedy, 22, of Saginaw. "I knew she went above and beyond, but it's another thing to tell her thank you like this. Dispatchers don't get that, but they could be the last voice you hear."

The Saginaw County Chapter of the American Red Cross is honoring individuals in nine categories, including 911 Dispatch Hero Muskeyvalley, who has worked as a dispatcher for 17 years. She started with the Saginaw Fire Department and moved over to dispatch in 1995.

Muskeyvalley, 48, of Saginaw Township works 12-hour shifts at the communications center downtown.

"All our calls are important, but this one stood out. She was home alone and these guys kicked in the door. Our job is to get them safe and keep them on the phone until the police get there."

Kennedy saw the two men casing the house. When they broke in, she grabbed her cell phone and hid in the bathroom.

"I told her to get in the tub and pull the curtain. She was so scared and worried about her baby. That struck something in me," said Muskeyvalley, a mother of two and grandmother of one.

Saginaw police officers arrived quickly -- the entire call lasted about eight minutes -- but "seemed like forever" to the women.

"She walked me through everything and coached me to stay quiet," Kennedy said. "She let me know when the police were coming in and stayed so calm. I still see their faces. They will stick with me forever."

The officers arrested the men at gunpoint and took them to the County Jail. A judge convicted them of home invasion; one is serving a prison sentence of five to 40 years, the other five to 20 years.

Kennedy gave birth to a daughter, Amelia Fowler, also the daughter of Richard Fowler, in February.

The call stood out for Muskeyvalley and her co-workers -- out of 1,000 calls per average day -- because everything came together for success and the caller was so appreciative, she said.

"We don't always know what happens to people. Her dad called and thanked us that night. I can't wait to meet her and the baby. I think about her all the time," she said.

"It's an honor to receive this award. I am going to enjoy the evening with eight members of my family."

The event is a fundraiser for Saginaw County Red Cross.

Supervisors in the 40-employee 911 agency nominate several dispatchers every year for the award, said Tom McIntyre, executive director. A Red Cross selection committee chooses the winner.

The committee also selected these people as 2009 Everyday Heroes -- "people reaching out to someone in need and doing remarkable things":

ÉAdult Good Samaritans -- Daughter and mother Joy Fath, 27, of Oakley and Lucinda S. Shooltz, 50, of Chesaning Township, who responded Nov. 25 to an Amber Alert issued for a car driven by Jose A. Olquin, who police believed had killed his wife and fled Saginaw with their three children. The women saw the car at a gas station in Oakley, called police and followed until officers stopped and arrested Olquin. He is in jail and the children are with family members.

ÉAdult Good Samaritan -- Adam S. Baker, 27, of Birch Run, who helped people trapped in a Sept. 7 three-vehicle collision at Dehmel and Busch roads in Birch Run Township.

ÉBiomedical Hero -- Tiffany Jeter, 30, of Saginaw, who donates blood regularly and sponsors drives at her workplace. She was injured in a 1999 car wreck and needed five units of blood to survive.

ÉEducator Hero -- Stephen Tack, 54, of Saginaw, a math teacher at the Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy who used an automated external defibrillator and performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation to save the life of a young man who collapsed at the Saginaw school in February.

ÉFamily Good Samaritans -- Colleen Sylvester, 42, of Freeland and her son, Jordyn, 9, who saw a 4-year-old boy choking on a plastic ball. Jordyn ran to his mom, who performed the Heimlich maneuver and saved the neighbor boy.

ÉLaw Enforcement Heroes -- Saginaw Township Police Officers Rick Herren, 38, of Saginaw; Brian Kanicki, 34, of Saginaw; Brent Pinter, 40, of Bay City; Detectives Tom McInerney, 50, and Chad Brooks, 39, both of Saginaw; and Postal Carrier Kenneth Williams. They worked together on Feb. 15 to save a man trapped in a burning apartment on Wexford Street in Saginaw. Williams saw the smoke coming from the third-floor apartment and called 911. The officers arrived first and entered the building with no protective gear. They had to go in and out of the smoke to free the victim laying unconscious in the kitchen. He has since fully recovered.

ÉMilitary Heroes -- Bravo Company, First Battalion, 24th U.S. Marine Corps for their Toys for Tots effort that gives toys to needy children each Christmas. The Marines started the project 60 years ago.

ÉWally Bronner Community Spirit Award, a newly renamed award honoring the late Bronner for all his giving throughout his life and work at Bronner's Christmas Wonderland in Frankenmuth. He died April 1, 2008.