



Saint Louis County

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Ross Litman
Sheriff

NEWS RELEASE

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St. Louis County Sheriff recognizes large group for lifesaving teamwork

A 10-year-old girl and her grandmother will be honored, along with members of the Virginia Police and Fire Department, and St. Louis County 911 operators, for their teamwork in saving a woman and two young children from a house fire this past August. The group will be recognized by Sheriff Ross Litman with 911 Life Saver Awards during the County Board meeting on Tuesday, October 8. The meeting will be held at the Hermantown City Hall, 5105 Maple Grove Road.

Lauren Devich had been riding in a car driven by her grandmother, Cindy Forseen, when she spotted a fire on a porch at 709 5th Avenue South. Lauren pointed it out to her grandma, who called 911. A total of seven 911 emergency communications specialists quickly got involved, taking the call and dispatching police, fire and other resources to the scene.

Three police officers arrived first and found the front of the home on fire. They entered through a back door to check if anyone was in the home. Despite the smoke, Lt. Chad Nickila and officers Steven Estey and Eric Thomsen were able to find a woman, who appeared disoriented. She at first told them she was alone. Estey and Nickila headed upstairs anyone to double check. The woman then said her three-year-old daughter was in an upstairs bedroom. Estey had to kick in a door to get to the frightened child and carry her downstairs. Thomsen, meanwhile, was helping to get the woman out of the house, when she told him she had a baby on the couch. She was able to show him where, and he rescued the small child.

Within three minutes of being dispatched, the Virginia Fire Department arrived at the house and began working to control the fire.

"This story could very easily have ended tragically," said Litman. "But thanks to some

observant passersby, remarkable bravery by these officers and firefighters, and quick teamwork from all our emergency communication specialists, a woman and two children are alive today.”

Among those being honored with 911 Life Saver Awards are: Cindy Forseen and Lauren Devich; Lt. Chad Nickila and Officers Steven Estey and Eric Thomsen from the Virginia Police Department; Fire Chief Daniel L'allier, Assistant Chief Antony Krulc, Captain Gwendoline Webb, Fire Equipment Operator Russell Carlson, Firefighter Daniel Cerise and Firefighter Ross Gramling from the Virginia Fire Department; and St. Louis County 911 Emergency Communication Specialists Nanette Blom, Shawn Amundson, Sarah Adelson, Edie Hill, Linda Smith, Joy Hill and Lon Hanson.

Since 1993, St. Louis County has recognized the efforts of those individuals who have worked together, often risking their own safety, to save others. The 911 Life Saver Award honors those worthy of such recognition, but also serves to educate the public on how the County's 911 system works.

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