

For Immediate Release



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Town of East Hartford Receives Heart Safe Designation Recognizes Dispatcher and Good Samaritan for their Lifesaving Efforts

East Hartford, CT (April 18, 2019)—Mayor Marcia A. Leclerc accepted a HEART Safe Community award on behalf of the Town of East Hartford during a special ceremony, dedicated to the National Telecommunicators' Week this morning. The ceremony took place at the East Hartford Public Safety Complex.

"I am proud that East Hartford once again received a HEART Safe Community designation," said Mayor Marcia A. Leclerc. "This award is a well-deserved recognition of the hard work and dedication of our public safety and emergency personnel who ensure the wellbeing of the community on a daily basis."

The designation is a public health initiative, assisting Connecticut municipalities in improving the chances of survival from a sudden cardiac arrest. To receive this designation, the community must meet a strict criteria, including widespread CPR instruction and public access to AED. The Town of East Hartford is designation HEART Safe Community since 2012 and is one of 110 Connecticut municipalities to receive this recognition.

The ceremony also recognized and awarded Dispatcher Tammy Castagna and Leah Higginbotham, who was working for Sodexo, a food services company, at that time, for saving a life of a resident in cardiac arrest on February 13, 2019. That day, the East Hartford Public Safety Communications 911 Center received 4 separate 911 calls within seconds of each other reporting a medical emergency at an unknown address.

Dispatcher Castagna answered one of those emergency calls. The caller was Leah Higginbotham, who was driving her vehicle down a town street and had stopped to assist a resident, suffering a medical emergency. Leah quickly determined the resident was in a cardiac arrest. She promptly relayed this information to Dispatcher Castagna, who, through her extensive training, provided lifesaving instructions and coached Leah on how to deliver CPR,

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ultimately saving the residents' life. Shortly after, emergency crews located the patient, who was rapidly assessed, treated and transported to Hartford Hospital.

"I am very proud of the actions that Tammy (and Leah) took that day," said Police Chief Scott Sansom. "It worked out well. We thank our telecommunicators for looking out for us and having our back."

"This event is just one example of how our telecommunicators improve the quality of life for East Hartford residents and all who visit," said Fire Chief John Oates. "We are proud of the work each and every one of them does every day. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to the telecommunicator profession."

National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week was formally recognized in 1994 and it is celebrated each year to emphasize the hard work that dispatches perform on a daily basis for the benefit of the community.

For information on CPR training, please visit the American Heart Association website at <https://www.heart.org/en/cpr>