



*Marshall County
Communications Center
2020
Annual Report*

Rhonda Braudis, 911 Communications Director
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Mission Statement

The Marshall County Communications Center is committed to serving with integrity, compassion and care for the welfare and safety of our citizens and personnel. We support expedient, quality services through the industries best practices. Our standard is excellence and the road to success is through our teamwork. We serve as the critical link between the citizens and, visitors of Marshall County, and the public safety Agencies that serve them.

Safety is our First Priority
Integrity is our Commitment

These Values We Believe

Harmony ~ We trust, respect, and care for each other and treat everyone as a valued member of our team

Service ~ Safety is our first priority – citizens are the focus of everything we do

Integrity ~ We are committed to the highest level of professional and ethical conduct

Teamwork ~ Cohesively working together to achieve a common goal for the betterment of the individuals we serve and the future of our center

Fun ~ Every day we will give our best effort and have fun along the way

Vision Statement

To provide Service in a manner that fosters trust, respect, confidence and appreciation as a trusted and valued member of the Marshall County Communications Center

Agency Profile

The Marshall County Communications Center will be entering its third year under the Marshall County Communications Commission. The Communications Center provides dispatching and E911 services for all of Marshall County. The center is staffed with civilian personnel working together as 911 Communications Specialists in law enforcement and Fire/EMS dispatching, CTO's (Communications Training Officer), Supervisor, and the director.

The Marshall County Communications Center is responsible for answering both emergency and non-emergency calls for service on a regular basis. The Comm Center monitors up to eleven (11) radio channels, and has the capability to monitor an additional fourteen (14) channels if necessary. It also is responsible for three (3) E911 phone lines and an additional ten (10) emergency and non-emergency lines. In FY20, the Marshall County Communications Center handled a total of 81,897 phone calls including emergency and non-emergency. In 2017 text-to-911 was implemented – a Next Generation 911 capability that allows citizens to text their emergency if unable to speak; a service that is not yet nationally mandated.

The Marshall County Communications Center has been recognized for professionalism, commitment to public safety, leadership, and innovation. Our performance and training is measured against the standards provided by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO). The MCCC's authorized strength is fifteen (15) full-time employees to include eleven (11) 911 Communications Specialists, two (2) 911 Lead Communications Specialists, one (1) 911 Communications Supervisor, and one (1) 911 Communications Director.

The Marshall County Communications Center operates three (3) twelve-hour shifts and one (1) four-hour shift on Fridays for a total of forty (40) hours per week. We have four (4) Communications Training Officers (CTO) recently certified in house through APCO to meet national standards.

Marshall County Communications Center Staff

Rhonda Braudis, CPE, RPL, NREMT ~ 911 Communications Director
Tiffany Eibs, CTO, Tactical Dispatch Coordinator ~ 911 Communications Supervisor
Angela Duffy ~ 911 Communications Specialist – Pending Retirement
Tammy Bowman ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Allie Erickson ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Shannon Wegner, CTO, Tactical Dispatcher ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Zac Mann, CTO ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Hayley Paige, CTO, Tactical Dispatcher ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Larry Springston, CTO ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Shane Andrews, CTO ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Joanna Timmer ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Caitlan Reineke ~ 911 Communications Specialist
VACANT (*Grant Participant*) ~ 911 Communications Specialist
VACANT (*Grant Participant*) ~ 911 Communications Specialist
VACANT (*Grant Participant*) ~ 911 Communications Specialist
Melinda Roupp, Tactical Dispatcher ~ PRN 911 Communications Specialist

Collectively, the years of dispatch service, talent, and experience at the Marshall County Communications Center amounts to decades of experience – clearly indicating the drive, passion, and dedication to public service projected from a team of true professionals.

Training and Quality Assurance

The Marshall County Communications Center has implemented a full standardized training program following the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) standards. Proper training is extremely important to the MCCC, as public safety agencies are held legally accountable for the actions of their personnel. Procedures included in the Communications training program provide a standardized and systematic approach to training. The training is designed specifically for the purpose of training and career development of all employees.

The Communications Training Officer (CTO) program has been completely redesigned to focus on essential elements and components of a one-on-one standardized training program, specifically through the use of Daily Observation Report's (DOR). Standardized training provides similar training to all new employees. Each employee is exposed to the same training experience, and each is provided the same opportunity for success.

The core of any training program is the trainer – the person who conducts the training and helps the student build skills, knowledge, and abilities. While the Director, Supervisor/Training Coordinator can have a positive effect on the overall program, the CTO actually delivers the training. CTO's make sure that citizens and internal customers continue to receive a high quality of service while transforming new hires into effective employees. The Marshall County Communications Center CTOs are all certified through the APCO Communications Training Officer Course as instructed by the Director/APCO Adjunct Instructor.

Abiding by Iowa Code 501-13.3(1) (80B) requirements, all 911 Communication Specialists are required to take the 40-hour Basic Communications course within the first year of employment. The costs incurred through ILEA at \$375 per class plus travel expenses (roughly \$500 for the week) to send each student to ILEA; versus the benefit of providing a Nationally accepted 40-hour Certification course through APCO, that is instructed in house at a ¼ of the cost focusing on Marshall County specific quickly became more desirable. A request was sent August 5, 2019 to teach inter-agency the APCO PST1 (Public Safety Telecommunicator 1), permission was granted from Iowa Law Enforcement Academy August 18, 2020. The APCO Public Safety Telecommunicator (PST1) Course, is a level up from the State basic course and can be customized to Marshall County specifics for training purposes. The Marshall County Communication Center also requires that Supervisors, be certified through the APCO Communications Center Supervisor Course. Supervisor Eibs has received this course and successfully passed.

Training is a constant mission in the Marshall County Communications Center. Not only are 911 personnel required to take their initial certification classes, they must also participate in Continuing Dispatch Education (CDE) training sessions for annual training minimums. These training sessions may be in the form of quizzes, dispatch related articles, protocol-driven exercises, in-service classes, or anything else deemed an appropriate learning related activity.

In an effort to continue training all 911 Communications Specialists within the Communications Center, three talented members of our team took the necessary steps to become agency instructors for the following disciplines. Supervisor Tiffany Eibs, Public Safety Telecommunicator I Instructor; CTO Hayley Paige, Emergency Medical Dispatch Instructor; and CTO Larry Springston, Fire Service Communications.

Public Safety Telecommunicator I ~ Instructor

The PST Course covers the basics skills, knowledge and abilities every successful public safety telecommunicator needs to meet the demands of this critical work. The basic Public Safety Telecommunicator Training Course meets or exceeds the American National Standards as contained in the ANSI approved Minimum Training Standard for Public Safety Telecommunicators. Building on foundational topics such as communication skills, call taking and radio techniques, the PST course incorporates the most up-to-date information on technology and work-related issues in Public Safety Communications Centers. Topics include NextGen 911, emerging technologies, continuing education and liability.



Emergency Medical Dispatch ~ Instructor



Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) is a systematic program of handling medical calls for assistance. Trained telecommunicators, using locally-approved EMD Guidecards, can quickly and properly determine the nature and priority of the call, dispatch the appropriate response and then give the caller instructions to help treat the patient until the responding EMS unit arrives. Topics Include: Roles, Responsibilities and Resource Allocation, Legal & Liability Issues (National & State Standards), Call Taking & APCO EMD Guidecard Information, Chief Complaint Types Review, Anatomy & Physiology, Quality Assurance and Recertification, Stress Management. The classroom setting provides practical exercises to help the new EMD become familiar with the theories and practices of EMD and students will practice with either their agency's Guidecards or the APCO Institute Training EMD Guidecards in simulated EMD calls.

Fire Service Communications ~ Instructor

Fire Dispatch requires effective communications, and is a critical component of fire service operations. It provides the vital link between citizens and responders. APCO Institute's Fire Service Communications Course continues to advance fire communications training, improving service to the caller and increasing safety of the responders. This dynamic course covers the terms, techniques and protocols required for excellence in fire service call taking and dispatch. Topics Include: Introduction to the Fire Service, Fire Service Apparatus & Terminology, Fire Service Communications Overview, Fire Service Call Processing, Fire Dispatch Procedures, Fire Service Incidents, NIMS & ICS, Hazardous Materials Incidents, and Terrorism Incidents.



Organizational Integrity

The Marshall County Communications Center has adopted the Telecommunicator Code of Ethics published by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials – International (APCO). Members of the Marshall County Communications Center are required to abide by the Code of Ethics, especially when situations arise which are not directly addressed by other policies. The Code of Ethics is located within their personnel files. All personnel are required to read, acknowledge receipt of, and abide by the Code of Ethics.

Personnel Accomplishments

ACTION	2020
EMD Training	12
Agency Instructors	3
Public Safety Telecommunicator	4
State APCO ~ Team of the Year	1
Various Training /CDE Courses	26
Total	46 / Continuous Training

Personnel Actions

ACTION	2020
Verbal Warning / Training	Continuous Training
Counseling	6
Written Reprimand	4
Suspension	5
Termination	1
Fit for Duty	1
Total	4 + Continuous Training

911 Dispatch Statistics

ACTION	2020
911	16,609
Administrative	60,099
Crime Stopper	415
Ring Down	4,774
Total	81,897

National standards 3.1 as published in the NENA Call Answering Standard/Model Recommendation 56-005.1 (revised 2017). Ninety percent (90%) of all 9-1-1 calls arriving at the Public Safety answering Point (PSAP) shall be answered within ten (10) seconds during the busy hour (the hour each day with the greatest call volume, as defined in the NENA Master Glossary). Ninety-five (95%) of all 9-1-1 calls should be answered within twenty (20) seconds. The Marshall County Communications Center greatly exceeds this standard with an average ring time of three (3) seconds (see appendix).

Call for Service Statistics

Fire Related Incidents	2019 / 2020
Marshalltown Fire Department	2,828 / 2,938
Albion Volunteer Fire Department	54 / 63
Clemons Volunteer Fire Department	46 / 30
Ferguson Volunteer Fire Department	8 / 4
Gilman Volunteer Fire Department	44 / 47
Green Mountain Volunteer Fire Department	41 / 50
Haverhill Volunteer Fire Department	31 / 41
Laurel Volunteer Fire Department	25 / 27
Legrand Volunteer Fire Department	47 / 59
Liscomb Volunteer Fire Department	28 / 35
Melbourne Fire Department	42 / 47
Rhodes Volunteer Fire Department	42 / 42
State Center Volunteer Fire Department	87 / 85
.... TOTAL	3,323 / 3,468

Medical Related Incidents	2019 / 2020
Unity Point Hospital	5,877 / 4,492
Albion First Responder	113 / 139
Gilman First Responder	97 / 106
Green Mountain First Responder	76 / 78
Haverhill First Responder	97 / 24
Laurel First Responder	94 / 21
Legrand First Responder	145 / 161
Liscomb First Responder	108 / 133
Melbourne First Responder	108 / 138
Rhodes First Responder	104 / 133
State Center First Responder	183 / 165
.... TOTAL	7,002 / 5,590

Law Enforcement Related Incidents	2019 / 2020
Marshalltown Police Department	30,246 / 29,341
Marshall County Sheriff's Office	22,177 / 23,191
Melbourne/Rhodes Department	80 / 110
State Center Police Department	669 / 1865
Outside County / Drug Task Force	10/12
.... TOTAL	53,182 / 54,519

Call Handling Procedures

The Marshall County Communications Center continues refining policies, procedures, and guidelines for handling all types of calls for service. Communications personnel receiving phone calls judge the characteristics of the call to determine whether it is an emergency or non-emergency. The Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is programmed to assign a given priority to each type of incident based on the call type chosen; however, the dispatchers have the option to notify field personnel and assign additional responders to higher priority calls when appropriate. As EMD Intellicom continues to evolve, its purpose is to process priority and special response calls; and provide instructions when needed for Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD). Expected implementation and rollout to be completed by July 2021.

Relevant information for each request for service is obtained and recorded to include control number, date and time of request, complainant information, incident type and location, units dispatched, time, arrival and return of service for each unit, as well as record of the final disposition or status of the incident. Misdirected calls are appropriately handled and rerouted, including correcting database errors.

Marshall County Communications Center personnel have received specialized training in Autism, Crisis Negotiation, Public Safety Telecommunications (PST1), Communications Training Officer (CTO), Communications Center Supervisor (CCS), Active Shooter, Resiliency, as well as attending the Iowa State APCO/NENA Virtual Conference, webinars, Tactical Dispatch virtual training as well as other courses for CDE credit. These courses and like efforts contribute to trailblazing efforts with the objective and priority of providing Marshall County's emergency responders with a standard of care that corresponds with the mission, vision and values of its core team / 911 Communications Specialists.

Processing emergency/non-emergency calls can be inherently taxing, as callers are often dealing with traumatic events. Telecommunicators are trained to ask key questions, pertinent to each unique scenario, and obtain the nature and extent of the incident. Once this is ascertained they then determine what resources are needed to respond and dispatch the appropriate units. Due to the demands of this job and the need to get the right resources to the correct location the training program has been revamped; there is a thorough eighteen (18) week, training program as well as continued training requirements for all personnel in the center. Training includes weekly and monthly required trainings in police/fire related topics, as well as online training and in person seminars and scenario training.

Communications Center Accomplishments - 2020

Commission Directives ~ Through what is best described as a tumultuously unpredictable year, mixed with disaster and the COVID-19 pandemic, all directives set forth by the Commission have been at the forefront while still navigating the events of 2020. We have stopped questioning the status quo and began establishing "what's next" preparing for what is around the corner. Personnel files continue to be added to, and reviewed as need for all current employees as well as new hires entering the Marshall County Communications Center. Quality assurance is being performed randomly on calls taken to ensure standards are being met and succeeded.

Staffing ~ Currently we have 3 open positions, and a fourth pending due to retirement in the coming year. Hiring processes have been started with a projected hire date of February, 2021 to fill the three vacant spots.

Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) ~ A specialized team was assembled. The team reviewed guidecards for selection of our EMD Program. The team decided to go with the APCO Institute Emergency Medical Dispatch Guidecards. The team consisted of our Medical Director Dr. Blaine Westemeyer, Paramedic Tanner Wolken, 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis, Communications Center Supervisor Tiffany Eibs, and 911 Communications Specialist Hayley Paige. All employees took the Emergency Medical Dispatcher class through the Association of Public Communications Officials (APCO), in addition all current employees have had extensive CPR training and Certification. Going forward all future employees will be required to have CPR certification prior to employment. A grant was awarded to provide the electronic version of EMD on all computers in the center to be implemented in 2021.

Tactical Dispatching Program ~ The specialized position of Tactical Dispatcher was created and implemented through a vigorous selection process. Interviews were held October 22, 2020 and three Tactical Dispatchers were selected: Melinda Ruopp (PRN dispatcher), Shannon Wegner and Hayley Paige. Supervisor Tiffany Eibs serves as Tactical Dispatch Coordinator over the program. In 2020 three callouts were received with great success of the program and its implementation. Projected training coordination with the SWAT Team and Task Force in 2021 will continue to strengthen the program.

Grants ~ A total of four grants were received in 2020:

- **Coronavirus Employer Innovation Fund ~ \$100,000.00**
The Marshall County Communications Commission – 911 Center has been selected as 1 of 65 recipients of the Coronavirus Relief Fund Employer Innovation Fund Grant. This program is centered around a grassroots effort to solve local workforce challenges while helping Iowans find economic opportunity in their communities. This grant afforded the ability to implement EMD Intellicom, the electronic version of the Guidecards in the Communications Center. An extension to the rollout guidecard usage and practice has now been projected to July 2021 while the electronic enhancement and interface are built.
- **IDPH – Unity Point ~ \$2,400.08**
Looking forward focusing on sustainability and redundancy a grant was written and received for two laptops for the Marshall County 911 Communications Center. These laptops were loaded with programs as well as the CAD (computer aided dispatch) software needed to work remotely if needed to evacuate. These laptops serve as an essential tool for a “go bag” as well as a tool for CTO’s (Communications Training Officers) to utilize during training and maintain a moderate social distance through a pandemic.
- **Coronavirus Earn to Learn Grant ~ \$129,800.00**
The Marshall County Communications Commission – 911 Center has been selected as 1 of 45 recipients of the Coronavirus Earn to Learn Grant. This grant was designed to lead to training opportunities in high demand occupations helping Iowans find good-paying, family-supporting careers. This fund supported the creation and expansion of a short-term process for up to six Iowans with the Communications Center. This grant afforded the ability to obtain and install an additional console within the communications center allowing for greater maneuverability not only in training but to allow future opportunities and more effective use when disaster strikes examples of this are the 2018 Tornado and the 2020 Derecho impacting Marshall County.

- **Byrne-Justice Assistance Grant JAG ~ \$5,747.00**

The Marshall County Communications Commission – 911 Center has been selected as a recipient of this grant designed to promote social distancing and preventing the spread of Coronavirus through practice, equipment or supplies. The effect of this grant will purchase individual primary keyboards, additional headsets, and ultraviolet light sanitizers for the Communications Center in an effort to cut down on germs.

New Hire Testing ~ Marshall County Communications Center in 2019 made the switch from the Zone test, which was determined invalid and unreliable at its core, to the now implemented Ergometrics testing software. In review the new testing system is the ErgoMetrics ECOMM National Computer-Based Simulation Testing. Ergometrics & Applied Personnel Research, Inc. is a human resource management firm specializing in personnel selection. Established in 1981, Ergometrics has designed the most comprehensive, award-winning video testing and job simulation testing programs in the nation. They have provided personnel testing services for thousands of agencies throughout the United States and Canada. Ergometric’s video simulations have been administered to over two million candidates. The new testing software has proven effective and reliable, the grant awards afforded future testing of approximately 60 applicants free.

Titles / Position Change ~ In 2019, titles for all Marshall County Communications Center employees had been changed with commission approval. Previously the titles included the word “Operator”, through past decades the 911 industry has pushed to move away from this as nationally 911 professionals are working towards recategorizing this profession away from “clerical” to “emergency services” where it should be placed. Previous titles included – Communications Manager, Lead Operator and Communications Operator. September 2020, a need was presented to accept turning a current position into a second Lead 911 Communications Specialist to provide better coverage and further the progressive leadership ladder discussed in the previous year. Interviews were held in December and the first of the two Lead positions was filled with the Lead taking position January 1, 2021.

2020 State APCO Team Telecommunicators of the Year Award Winners ~ Nominations were submitted in February, 2019, unfortunately state conference was cancelled due to the Coronavirus Pandemic however the nomination submitted by the Marshall County Communications Center was chosen as the winner. These award recipients will be recognized at the 2021 State Conference provided it is not cancelled as well. Team winners are Hayley Paige (pictured left), and Allie Erickson (pictured right).



Communications Center Goals - 2021

Emergency Medical Dispatching ~ In 2020 a specialized team had been assembled and began the monumental task of guidecard review for implementation. This team consists of our Medical Director D. Blaine Westemeyer, Paramedic Tanner Wolken, 911 Communications Director Rhonda Braudis, Communications Center Supervisor Tiffany Eibs, and 911 Communications Specialist Hayley Paige. Guidecards were completed in 3rd quarter of 2020, at this time a potential grant was identified and sought after providing the ability to move straight into implementation of the electronic version of guidecards. Fundamental practice of guidecards usage would remain the same however efficiency and ability to filter information directly into the CAD system without shifting back and forth would improve immensely the workload of the 911 Communications Specialist allowing more focus to be placed on the caller and responders in the field. An implementation team for the grant provided Intellicom program has been formed consisting of Communications Center Supervisor Tiffany Eibs, Lead 911 Communications Specialist and CTO Shane Andrews, CTO Hayley Paige, and CTO Larry Springston. Review and implementation is projected for July, 2021.

Training / Continuing Dispatch Education ~ Training is essential within this profession, at the conclusion of 2021 the goal of the Communications Center is to have all personnel, and new hires trained in Public Safety Telecommunications (REQUIRED Basic-40hr), Emergency Medical Dispatch (REQUIRED, EMD), Fire Service Communications, Bullying and Negativity in the Communications Center. Further training will be sought out to enhance areas for continuous improvement within the Communications Center.

911 Education Program ~ In October, 2019 a state grant was sought after and obtained for 911 public education funds. Approval was granted for a total of \$12,000. Educational items are in the finalization of being purchased and formal education will begin in the schools as well as community functions throughout the year.

Policy and Procedure ~ This has been a top priority not only for the Commission but the 911 Communications Director as well. In 2019/2020 fifty-five (55) policies have been created ranging from Liability to Call taking and everything in between such as smoking in the workplace. Policy and procedure is a set of documents that are reviewed annually for accuracy.

911 Christmas Blessings Box ~ The Marshall County 911 Communications Center launched the first annual Christmas Blessing Box Project on November 2nd of 2020! This was kicked off to those families in need of a hot dinner for the holiday. Marshalltown and Marshall County has been through a lot of tragic events over the last couple of years. Those events range from the Tornado, Derecho Storm and the COVID-19 Pandemic. 911 Communication Specialist Larry Springston discovered a neighboring county in the state had a similar project that they do for their community during Thanksgiving. So, Marshall County Dispatchers decided to put this event on to simply be able to give back and help out. The entire 911 Team was in on this from the start to the very end. Larry was the driving force and coordinator for this project, a big push for this event was placed on social media, and the radio; we were also invited by the FOP to partake in their “Shop with a Cop” event and while the community dropped financial donations for that they could also donate food for the Christmas blessings boxes.

Event fliers were made and hung around town as well. Local businesses and the community supported numerous donations to be able to feed sixty-eight (68) families to include twenty-seven (27) families identified by the Marshalltown Community School District. The event was a huge success thanks in large part to Larry Springston volunteering many hours to this project to ensure its absolute success!



Summary

It is the vision of the Marshall County Communications Center to achieve the highest degree of public confidence. Our personnel are recognized for their professionalism, integrity, exemplary customer service, commitment to public safety, leadership and innovation. Marshall County Communications Center personnel are committed to saving lives, protecting property, assisting the public in their time of need, and ensuring the safety of our first responders through prompt, accurate, impartial, and professional call taking, dispatch and support services.

As 911 communications professionals, we strive to earn the public's trust and are challenged daily to maintain that trust. Every telephone call, every radio transmission and every service we provide demands our utmost attention and effective response. We effectively manage our resources, with fiscal prudence, in order to ensure an effective public safety response and a financially secure and well-maintained 911 Communications Center and communications infrastructure.

As trailblazers in the field of emergency communications, we embrace a future course of change, improvement, and challenge focused on accomplishing our strategic goals, including keeping pace with advances in technology that improve interoperability and accessibility to our services; efforts to control escalating operating costs; replacement of aging or inadequate communications infrastructure; and the all-important sharing of resources.

The Marshall County Communications personnel continue to form integral partnerships with our customers, all levels of city and county government, neighboring jurisdictions, State and Federal agencies, and our collaborative partners, and will work together in accomplishing the strategic goals of Marshall County as a whole.

**** IN CASE YOU MISSED IT ****

Marshall County's E-911 team cool under pressure Team has 'heart of a lion'

FEB 14, 2020



T-R PHOTO BY MIKE DONAHEY Supervisor Tiffany Eibs, Angie Duffy, director Rhonda Braudis, Zac Mann and Sharon Santiago stay warm on Thursday in the Marshall County E-911 Communications Center.

Marshall County Communications Commission director Rhonda Braudis celebrated her six month anniversary on the job.

She is thrilled with the support received from fire and police departments throughout the county and from commissioners in achieving that mini-milestone.

Regardless, her key focus Thursday was on her team of 12 operators — soon to be 14.

"I sat in with them before I started July 22 of last year," Braudis said. "The women and men who dispatch for the commission are amazing. They have the heart of a lion."

Marshalltown Police Chief Mike Tupper said E-911 communications operators, frequently referred to as dispatchers, have the toughest job in law enforcement.

Their task: Accurately dispatch deputies, firemen and police officers when seconds count and lives hanging in the balance.

Also, they are responsible for keeping track of more than 1,000 arrest warrants and no contact orders.

Five months of training is required before an operator can start on the job. Otherwise, graduation from high school or a GED are required.

During her career, Braudis has had callers commit suicide during the call and people have perished from fires and other disasters while on the phone for help.

“Operators frequently are dealing with people that are having the worst, or most stressful day of their life,” Braudis said.

While those incidents are sobering, she said she was excited to learn a young child she had once helped in an emergency situation had become an EMT.

“She was so impressed with how the EMTs responded to help her family she became one herself,” Braudis said.

Facilities

Since Aug. 30, operators have been housed in the new joint fire and police facility in the 900 block of South Second Street.

They have the most up-to-date communication equipment at their disposal in taking emergency calls from Marshall County residents while dispatching emergency responders and UnityPoint Health-Marshalltown ambulances.

Marshall County Emergency Management Coordinator Kim Elder said larger monitors and enhanced technology at the new facility has made a dispatcher’s job easier with improved communication with emergency responders.

“The difference between the new and old facility equipment is night and day,” Elder said. *“More and larger screens means the dispatchers will not have to flip from screen to screen as often”*

Their safety was also taken into consideration as well.

In the event of severe weather, hurricane-resistant metal screens will lower to cover several windows.

Dispatchers now have lockers, a lunch room and kitchen since they are required to remain at the center for their entire 12-hours shift.

“We have a lot of ‘team’ cooking here,” Braudis said. “It is good food and good for morale.”

Governing board

The Marshall County Communications Commission is comprised of Marshall County town mayors and designees, along with Marshall County Sheriff Steve Hoffman and Marshall County Supervisor Bill Patten.

Hoffman is the commission chairman.

What led to that change was implementation of a different funding formula. All E-911 expenses — from salaries to equipment to supplies — are paid from a levy applied to every property in the county.

This levy will appear on each property owner’s tax bill.

Previously, E-911 expenses were paid with a 38 percent levy applied to county residents and 62 percent to city residents. That was based on Marshall County’s census data showing 38 percent of the county’s population lived in rural areas, while 62 percent lived in Marshalltown. Additionally, telephone land line and cell phone users also paid a fee listed on the telephone or cell phone carrier’s customer bill.

For more information, contact Braudis at 641-754-4750 or rbraudis@marshalltown-ia.gov

Contact Mike Donahey at 641-753-6611 or mdonahey@timesrepublican.com

Dual grants from state help 911

NOV 9, 2020



Two grants provided by the state of Iowa’s Workforce Development Fund will provide funds for the Marshalltown 911 Communications Department and the Marshall County Communications Commission to give 911 training and certification to adults in the county, a big boost to a job that is always in need of more numbers no matter the season.

The director of the Marshall County Communications Department is Rhonda Braudis, who said the grants are different from each other.

The first grant, received Sept. 23, is a \$100,000 COVID Relief Fund grant by the state. Marshalltown is one of 65 recipients of the grant, which allows Braudis to fund a 911 education and certification program for members of Marshall County.

This certification will allow participants who complete the program to take a job as a 911 operator in Marshall County or anywhere in Iowa. The point of this course is to “*give them background of what it is and how it works,*” Braudis said.

This is an option that's open to anyone over the age of 18 and willing to participate, Braudis said.

"We want to make sure we get the right folks in here," she said. "It's a great job, but not necessarily for everyone."

The second grant, called Earn to Learn, will provide the department with \$129,800 to enroll six individuals who completed the course provided by the COVID Relief Fund grant and apply for this second course.

Anyone who completes the first course can apply if they would like, but only six will be selected.

Braudis said it is important for people to take the courses and figure out if they would want to actually do this job, since it requires an ability to converse with people who are in distress.

"Some might make it this far and be like 'This isn't what I thought it was,'" Braudis said. "And that's okay. You're going to be talking to people who are dealing with possibly the worst day of their life."

Marshalltown is one of 46 911 units in the state to receive the grant.

The grants do have deadlines — the COVID Relief Fund grant must be completed by February, and all money for the grants must be used by the end of December. So Braudis and her unit have no time to waste and are actively looking for applicants. She said they have 80 people signed up and have space for a total of 160-to-200 in the program.

She encouraged any and all people who are interested in participating to reach out to her, and for anyone who knew somebody looking for an opportunity to tell them about the program.

Braudis emphasized the part Iowa State Representative Dean Fisher and State Senator Jeff Edler played in this coming about, encouraging Braudis and agreeing about the importance of getting those grants.

She made clear that the Marshall County Communications Commission was a big help, too, in supporting her goal to get *"game-changing"* opportunities for the department.

"Their dedication to the people of Marshall County is remarkable, it really is," Braudis said. "This is a game-changer for some who have lost jobs during the pandemic."

Contact Noah Rohlfing at 641-753-6611 or nrohlfing@timesrepublican.com.

Junkyard engulfed in flames for 7 hours

NOV 20, 2020



T-R photos by Lana Bradstream — A Marshalltown Firefighter uses a truck to spray water onto a large fire at Critchfield Auto Salvage on Thursday. Shortly after the fire broke around noon, three trucks had responded to contain the flames to the property. No structures were endangered and no injuries were reported.

A giant plume of black smoke filled the sky Thursday on the east side of Marshalltown as a fire broke out at 2000 E. Nevada St. Burning tires and vehicles caused most of the smoke.

Marshalltown Police Capt. Chris Jones said the fire began at about 11:20 a.m. in a six-acre junkyard owned by Critchfield Auto Salvage.

“Workers were trying to dismantly a metal container and some sparks were created which ignited brush,” he said. “It was very windy and dry, but the fire has been contained.”

The Marshalltown Fire Department initially responded with three trucks. Deputy Fire Chief Christopher Cross said by the time the department arrived, the fire was well-involved.

The dry conditions, strong winds, various debris and brush, along with poor access complicated the incident, Cross said. After access to water and attack positions were established, the Marshalltown Fire Department requested aid from other agencies.



A Thursday fire broke out on property belonging to Critchfield Auto Salvage, near 18th Avenue, creating a large amount of black smoke on the east side of Marshalltown. The dry conditions and strong winds created a situation in which numerous fire departments responded. It was eventually contained to the property.

Rhonda Braudis, the 911 communications director for Marshall County Communications Commission said numerous county agencies responded.

“Marshalltown received a lot of mutual aid,” Braudis said.

Eight communities, 30 firefighters, 15 pieces of equipment and the majority of off-duty MFD personnel battled the blaze for seven hours. Ten fire departments – Albion, Clemens, Conrad, Gilman, Green Mountain, Laurel, LeGrand, Melbourne, State Center and Beaman – aided in the fire.

suppression. UnityPoint, the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and Marshall County Emergency Management assisted with logistical support. The Marshalltown Police Department recorded the fire with a drone.

Jones said firefighters spent quite a few hours finding the hot spots.

No structures were in danger and there were no injuries.



Contact Lana Bradstream at lbradstream@timesrepublican.com.

Police and dispatch accept donations for Christmas

NOV 30, 2020



T-R PHOTO BY JOE FISHER - Communications specialist Lawrence Springston, officer Andrew Cole, and communications director Rhonda Braudis worked a combination fundraiser and food drive outside the Marshalltown Police Department on Saturday. Donations were accepted for the 'Shop with a Cop' program and a Christmas dinner food drive.

The Marshalltown Police Department and Marshall County Communications are doing their part to give local families a happy holiday.

Members of both staffs held tandem drives outside the department headquarters, 909 S. Second Street, on Saturday morning. The police are raising funds for the 'Shop with a Cop' program. The Communications Commission is holding its first Christmas food drive to provide Christmas dinners to families in need.

During the drive on Saturday, 'Shop with a Cop' raised \$1,500 in three hours. Officer Andrew Cole said they usually give about \$100 per child so the money raised on Saturday alone will help give gifts to about 15 children.

“It’s going to take on a little bit of a different twist this year because usually the kids go out to the store and shop with us,” Cole said. “We’re trying to be COVID conscious and smart about things — the officers are going to be doing the shopping, some wrapping and delivering for them. So they won’t necessarily know what they’re getting this year.”

The Marshalltown PD in unison with the Fraternal Order of Police has done the ‘Shop with a Cop’ program for more than 20 years, according to Cole. He said in 2008 they were reaching out to about 20 children. Last year they shopped with 100. They are hoping to serve more than 60 this year.



T-R PHOTO BY JOE FISHER - Marshall County Communications specialist Lawrence Springston stacks up donations for the first annual Christmas dinner food drive. Springston hopes to hold more drives in the future.

The program uses nominations from community members and organizations to find children to give to.

While the children aren’t able to accompany officers shopping, they will send a wish list. Cole said they want to give the children the gifts they really want.

“We’ll use the money we raised to get them that and maybe a little something extra to help boost — just so they have a nice Christmas this year and show that we’re not always the bad guy necessarily,” Cole said. “We’re just trying to bridge some of those gaps in our community, not that

our community needs that. But we definitely have a community that supports us and we want to show the support back.”

One anonymous community member used ‘Shop with a Cop’ as motivation to quit smoking. He pledged to quit smoking about five weeks ago and he stopped ‘cold turkey.’ He used the money he would normally spend on his habit — which ended up being \$340 — and donated it to the program on Saturday. He also urged his friends to do the same.

“He had challenged some of his friends and he actually cut me a check for \$620,” Cole said. “There are people out there trying to better themselves, be health conscious and trying to help an organization out. It was pretty cool to have him show up this morning. He should have smoked 850 cigarettes in that time frame, he said.”



T-R PHOTO BY JOE FISHER - Marshalltown police officer Andrew Cole accepts a donation from a community member for ‘Shop with a Cop’ on Saturday. The program raised \$1,500 in three hours.

The police will accept donations through this week. Donations can be dropped off at the station or mailed to the Marshalltown Fraternal Order of Police, P.O. Box 362.

Communications specialist Lawrence Springston heard of another Iowa county holding a food drive for Thanksgiving and was inspired to do something similar for Christmas.

“I have amazing employees. They want to really do something to help the community this year,” said Rhonda Braudis, communications manager. *“This is kind of the brain child of Larry. He’s doing a great job. We’re getting a lot of donations. We’re just excited to be able to give something back to the community.”*

Marshall County Communications has donation boxes set up in several locations, which are:

- Police Department: 909 S. Second Street

Marshall County Communications Food Drive

To nominate a family or ask any questions, contact Lawrence Springston lspringston@marshalltown-ia.gov or communications supervisor Tiffany Eibs teibs@marshalltown-ia.gov.

Special arrangements for perishable donations, contact director Rhonda Braudis rbraudis@marshalltown-ia.gov.

Shop With a Cop

The police will accept donations through this week. Donations can be dropped off at the station or mailed to the Marshalltown Fraternal Order of Police, P.O. Box 362.

- Marshall County Sheriff’s Office: 2369 Jessup Avenue
- Oliver Beene Designs: 1714 S. Center Street
- Aaron’s: 2901 S. Center Street

The food drive is on track to help at least more than 30 families have a Christmas dinner.

Some of the items to consider for donation are drink mixes, canned food, stuffing, hams, turkeys, rolls and monetary donations.

“We’ll try to help as many as we can. Then we’ll pick up the slack as dispatchers, we’ll buy whatever we don’t get as donations, we’ll take care of it and help these families out and get them a hot meal and a little bit extra this year,” Springston said. *“Just to show them a sense of positivity and let them*

know we do care. We're more than just voices on the radios and phones for people. We have families and we do care about our community."

Dec. 16 is the last day to donate to the Christmas food drive. Meals will be delivered on Dec. 23. If making a monetary donation for the food drive at the police department, make sure to note what your donation is for.

"We're all excited to see how it goes. Hopefully this is our first year of many to come," Springston said.

Marshall County Communications Food Drive

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Shop With a Cop

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Contact Joe Fisher at 641-753-6611 or jfisher@timesrepublican.com

Commission delivers holiday food boxes

DEC 22, 2020

TIMES-REPUBLICAN



contributed photos — Marshall County Communications Specialist Larry Springston gives a Marshalltown resident a box of food during the Christmas Blessings Food Box event on Monday.

Sixty-seven households in Marshalltown received a special box on Monday from the Marshall County Communications Commission.

Director Rhonda Braudis said they held the first Christmas Blessings Food Box event and are planning to host another one next year. The event was coordinated by Larry Springston, who Braudis said donated hours of time.

Braudis posted on Facebook they were seeking nominations of families who could have benefited from a box full of food. The boxes contained either turkey or ham, stuffing, potatoes, canned vegetables and a pan to cook the turkey in.

“We wanted to do something positive for the community,” she said.

All of the commission employees helped with the event in some way – ranging from sorting the boxes to delivering them in person. The reactions of the people on the receiving end were varied.



Marshall County Communications employees Tiffany Eibs and Larry Springston show off a pickup bed carrying food boxes for lucky Marshalltown residents. The truck went all over Marshalltown on Monday to deliver the boxes.

“A lot of people wanted to send us ‘thank you’ cards and some people started to cry,” Braudis said. “It was profoundly humbling to participate in something like this. I am very proud of my staff. They all have such caring hearts. I could not be more pleased or could not have asked for a better staff. They did an outstanding job.”

