



NEWS RELEASE

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Ventura City Firefighters and Ventura Police Officers Work Together to Save a Life

Ventura, Calif. — The Ventura City Fire Department and Ventura Police Department honored the life saving work of three firefighter-paramedics and three police officers on Tuesday, May 18, 2021. The 41-year-old Ventura patient and his family were reunited at a special ceremony with firefighters, police, and paramedics at the Police/Fire Headquarters in Ventura.

The first responders were recognized for their instrumental role in performing CPR and saving the life of Ventura resident, Felipe Gonzales. Captain Luis Manzano, Engineer Brandyn Johnson, Firefighter-Paramedic Graham LaBarge, Officers Erik Utermohlen, Alberto Tovar, and George Orozco, American Medical Response (AMR) Paramedics James Lammon and Brandon Larson, and Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD) Dispatcher Brittany Farrell were grateful to meet the family and share a special evening together.

On Wednesday, February 24, 2021, Ventura Police officers and firefighters from Medic Engine 1 were dispatched to a reported cardiac arrest in progress at 2:52am. Officers arrived, located Gonzales in an upstairs apartment, and started CPR immediately. Firefighters arrived three minutes later and took over medical care for the victim.

Firefighter-paramedics moved the victim to the living room for further assessment while officers took the family into a separate room to gather more information. Firefighters transferred the patient to a backboard, and with the assistance of all three officers carrying gear, were able to maneuver the patient down various sets of zig-zag stairs and to an ambulance for transport.

“These calls are when seconds truly count,” said Fire Captain Luis Manzano. “Thanks to the coordination and great partnership between police officers and firefighters, the patient was able to have the best chance of survival.”

It was later determined the patient was suffering from a viral infection that led to an irregular heart rhythm, causing him to go into cardiac arrest. Due to the effort of police officers, firefighters, AMR team members, and the VCFD dispatcher, the patient was successfully resuscitated and is back home with his family.

Mr. Gonzales contacted the Ventura City Fire Department months after the incident looking to meet the first responders who saved his life to personally thank them for their professionalism and dedication to duty.

This ceremony took place during National Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Week, which is recognized each year during the third week in May. EMS Week brings together the community and emergency medical responders to pay special recognition and honor to those who provide day-to-day lifesaving services.

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