



Letter of Award Medal of Merit



To: Reserve Officer Carrie Christiansen
From: Craig N. Meidl, Chief of Police
Date: January 23, 2020
Re: Medal of Merit Award

Lt. Steve Braun recently nominated you for the Medal of Merit Award for your involvement in and development of the "Cop Talk" program at Eastern State Hospital. The Medal of Merit is awarded to members of the department who distinguish themselves by meritorious achievement or meritorious service. The meritorious actions must clearly surpass that which is normally required or expected. This service or achievement need not be unique but must be exceptional and superior. When the Special Awards Committee reviewed this nomination, it was clear that you are most deserving of this recognition. In his nomination, Lt. Braun included:

"In 2018, Reserve Officer Carrie Christiansen, who also works as a nurse at Eastern State Hospital, met with Officer Graig Butler to discuss having an SPD officer engage in outreach with patients at Eastern State Hospital. They recognized the need to develop a program to improve the relationships between officers and the patients due to 90% of the patients staying at the hospital having been referred there by law enforcement, many of those patients having a criminal history, and that many of those patients had been involved in use of force incidents with law enforcement.

Officer Butler and Reserve Officer Christiansen developed a curriculum that allowed them to present common scenarios to patients with a goal of teaching them how and why officers respond to situations that may involve a person in crisis while also allowing the patients to talk about their experiences with law enforcement. This dialogue between officers and patients was designed to improve how officers respond to individuals in crisis, reduce use of force incidents, reduce arrests during these incidents, and get individuals the services they need more efficiently.

After developing the curriculum, Officer Butler contacted Officer David Dunkin due to his desire and skill in interacting with individuals in crisis, to assist in implementing the "Cop Talk" program at Eastern State Hospital. Officer Butler, Officer Dunkin, and Reserve Officer Christiansen first delivered the "Cop Talk" program to Eastern State Hospital in September 2018 and have continued the program on a monthly basis ever since."

Lieutenant Braun had the opportunity to observe the program in November 2019 and was amazed at how engaged the patients were with the officers. One of the patients had even participated in a video to discuss her experiences of dealing with law enforcement while in crisis and the positive impact the "Cop Talk" program has had on her life. Staff at Eastern State Hospital shared with Lt. Braun that many of the patients initially had a negative view of law enforcement but since the implementation of the program many of those views have become positive. Staff also shared that patients look forward to the officer's visit and that the positive impact of the visits has also carried over into other areas of their treatment.

Reserve Officer Christiansen, I am proud to present you with the Medal of Merit Award. You will be awarded the Medal of Merit during the annual Employee Awards Ceremony on March 12, 2020, and a copy of this letter will be placed in your personnel file.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Meidl".

Craig Meidl
Chief of Police