

OFFICER MICHAEL RUSSO



The Lifesaving Award is given to department personnel who, by their immediate actions, have saved a human life under unusual and/or extraordinary circumstances.



On the morning of 6/1/06 at 0201 hours, Officer David Beckley and Officer Ben Yinger were working a two-officer car in the area of 1405 N. Lincoln. A citizen waved them down and pointed up the street, where they saw the glow of a working structure fire. The structure was an L-shaped, 2-story building with many apartments. Spokane Fire Department response was requested as they quickly drove to the scene. Both officers saw that the second story corner apartment was engulfed in flames. The situation was rapidly assessed and the officers split up. Ofc. Beckley went to the south facing building and started pounding on the apartment doors in order to wake up residents and evacuate them. Ofc. Yinger did the same along the east facing building.

As this was occurring, Officer Michael Russo arrived and went to the rear of the building. He found some residents there who pointed to other apartments and advised they hadn't seen the residents come out yet. Ofc. Russo went to those apartments, where he pounded on the doors trying to awaken residents. Ofc. Russo got no answer at several apartments and kicked the doors open to alert and search for the occupants in order to safely evacuate them.

Ofc. Beckley woke up many sleeping people, including at least three babies/toddlers, at several of the apartments. The residents of these apartments had no idea the building was on fire. After alerting the occupants in the south building, Ofc. Beckley ran over to the east side to assist Ofc. Yinger. In one of the apartments, Ofc. Beckley awakened an older, disabled woman and her husband. Ofc. Beckley and Ofc. Yinger got her into her wheelchair and helped evacuate her out of the apartment across the street to safety. Once there Ofc. Beckley alerted medics because the female was having difficulty breathing.

Sergeant Fertakis arrived on scene in time to see the fire spreading along the roofline and into neighboring apartments before the fire department was able to engage. It is apparent that the actions of these officers prevented the loss of life from the smoke and fire at 1405 N. Lincoln.

Along with this document, Officer Russo was issued the Lifesaving Bar, to be worn on his uniform. He was also awarded the Lifesaving Medal at our annual Employee Awards Ceremony, in February 2007.

