

# Teen honoured for coming to grandmother's rescue

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York Region took some time to honour a group of its outstanding police, fire and EMS call takers and dispatchers last week.

The 16th annual Tri-Services Emergency Communicators Awards were held at the region's administration centre in Newmarket on Thursday evening and coincided with National Public Safety Telecommunications Week, which runs from April 13 to 19.

The awards are intended to pay tribute to the outstanding work of highly dedicated

and extensively-trained 911 communicators.

All together, 55 communication centre professionals were recognized over the course of the evening, but two of the most important honours may have gone to a pair of local young people in the form of Special Junior 911 Awards.

The first was presented to 13-year-old Cassandra Fraser of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, while the second went to seven-year-old Elena Maria Mills of Richmond Hill.

Both received the awards in recognition for their bravery and heroic actions in dialing 911 to assist family members in distress.

Tanya Highmore received the call taker of the year accolade for her empathetic and reassuring approach in speaking to an 11-year-old caller who had phoned in to report some disturbing alleged events in her home on Jan. 21, 2013. By employing a calm voice, Ms Highmore was able to obtain the youth's location and dispatch police, who were able to safely locate the young girl and her brother.

The dispatcher of the year nod went to Michele Premus for her professional approach in handling a home invasion call on Jan. 16, 2013. The call came in just after 11 a.m. and for the next five hours, Ms Premus maintained both her composure and control of the radio and the 42 units which were ultimately dispatched to the call.

She was able to efficiently prioritize the officers' requests and provide guidance and entered more than 100 updates over the course of the call.

C Platoon received the outstanding performance of a platoon award for their handling of all aspects of a home invasion call. From the onset of the call until the apprehension of the final suspect, the platoon worked together as a team to gather information and pass it along to police and the other agencies involved.

Finally, the outstanding achievement in the communication centre honour went to A Platoon for its handling of the ice storm Dec. 22, which left thousands in York Region without power. The 911/call centre became a go-to source of details for those seeking help and information about the outage. Members of A



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Cassandra Fraser, 13, and sister, Jenna, 9, of Stouffville, came to grandmother Johanna Gonzales' rescue by calling 911.

Platoon remained at all times calm, professional and resourceful while dealing with more than 1,600 calls to 911 that came in on top of the myriad of non-emergency calls.

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