

2017 Bill McMurray Award of Excellence Nomination – Cynthia Freeman

PROFESSIONAL STATEMENT

Cynthia Freeman is the communications manager for the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Valley control center and has been committed throughout her career to optimizing technology and human performance to continually enhance the safety and support services provided to sworn personnel in the field. Starting with the Department in 1985 as a dispatcher she was part of the team that came together to consolidate 9-1-1 call taking with field radio operations. San Bernardino County is the largest county in the nation by area. In 1987 the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department (SBSD) opened two regional communications centers, one in the Valley areas and another in the high desert region to serve the 31 communities, towns and incorporated cities within the county. Additionally, SBSB's Valley Control Center provides contract dispatching services to other agencies such as, the District Attorney's Office, Code Enforcement, Probation, Welfare Fraud and the San Bernardino Community College System.

As the Department expanded communications operations Cynthia promoted to a supervisory position overseeing daily operations. She went on to fill the newly created position of administrative supervisor overseeing staffing and special projects. It was here that Cynthia honed her skills in managing complex technical projects and upgrades. She went on to be named the first civilian manager of the Valley Control Center in 2007.

A former instructor at the P.O.S.T. Basic Dispatch Academy, Cyndee was able to develop and launch a formal in-house communications training program which she continues to support and works to expand in order to bring additional training to the region. Over the years she has worked on numerous regional committees to bring together area Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) center managers to standardize communications policies and assure implementation of best practices in addition to serving on safety and interoperability committees. She continues to serve the State of California in her capacity as a committee member on the P.O.S.T. Dispatch Advisory Council as well as her work with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Leading her center into the future, Cyndee is continually assessing the implications of changes in the legal environment and the impact of upcoming new technology in order to better meet the needs of public safety. Her comm center serves as a Beta test site to implement network-ready 9-1-1 phone solutions developed to allow enhanced efficiency and seamless transfer of entire operations in the event of major incidents.

Her latest project, the Inland Empire Regional Text to 9-1-1 Partnership, best illustrates Cyndee's proactive approach to meeting the current and future demands of public safety. This past May, as the FCC was mandating cell phone carriers to begin offering text 9-1-1, Cyndee formulated a coalition of 21 partner police and sheriff's agencies along with state OES officials in order to address the challenges of integrating text capabilities into the existing 9-1-1 infrastructure. She is leading the group through technical and public communications issues to implement the first "over the top" solution in California utilizing existing infrastructure for text to 9-1-1.

A mother of four, including teenage twin boys, Cyndee is able to successfully balance family life with the demands of being on-call 24/7 for the communications center. Her 2013 battle with a rare form of cancer has not slowed her down. After making a successful recovery she returned to work in half the time originally projected. Upon her return she formed a Relay for Life team to raise funds to fight cancer. She provides one on one support to other cancer patients as they move through treatment to recovery. She lends her time to a variety of causes from volunteering for the SBSB Mud Run to lending support to the Ronald McDonald House.

Cyndee's current goal to successfully implement Text to 9-1-1 availability on a regional scale is driven by her commitment to provide direct and equal access to 9-1-1 for the hearing and speech-impaired community. Across the country, the few centers who can take text messages on 9-1-1 often have to serve as message takers who then pass along the information to the appropriate agency that handles that jurisdiction. As the FCC and ADA supporters met to define the rules that will mandate text to 9-1-1 access, Cyndee has met with and set up testing with multiple vendors who provide texting in conjunction with cell phone carriers. She has outlined the requirements and compelled commercial vendors to add features to commercial products in order to meet the demands of public safety. Cyndee's work in this area will assure that the hearing and speech impaired community will be able to dial 9-1-1 for emergency services when they are away from home.

In addition to the example she sets for her employees, Cyndee's mentoring includes challenging employees to develop and initiate their own stretch goals and projects. She encourages participation not only in Department and community events but has facilitated the collaboration between P.O.S.T. committees and academic researchers studying the long-term impact of stress on those working in public safety communications.

Back at the SBSB Cyndee's Communications Center staff meetings are a high energy exchange of ideas on how to continuously improve safety and operations in support of field personnel and the public. Sworn personnel in attendance at comm staff meetings have commented that the staff members clearly have a passion for their work. It Cyndee's leadership that has underscored the importance of continually stepping up the capabilities of professional staff in support of public safety and sworn staff who put their lives on the line to protect

The first civilian appointed to serve as center manager of SBSB's Valley Control Center, Cyndee continues to press forward to improve operational capabilities not only at her center, but nationwide. Cyndee's center has been recognized for her work in Beta testing new 9-1-1 telecom networking capabilities and her center draws management from other 9-1-1 centers across the nation who want to observe and implement the networks that were first tested and refined at Valley Control.

In 2012 Cyndee was recognized as Center Manager of the Year by the California Public-Safety Radio Association. She continues to be a major contributor to moving SBSB's Valley Control Center and the public safety industry successfully into the future.