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OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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LETTER TO COMMISSION

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TO: Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Kathie G. Brooks, Interim City Manager

DATE: February 5, 2013

SUBJECT: LEO AWARD WINNER – OFFICER THOMAS FLEISCHHAUER

This Letter to the Mayor and City Commission is to announce that MBPD Officer Thomas Fleischhauer received the Miami Dade Association of Chiefs of Police Law Enforcement Award for Specialized Services at the 2012 LEO Awards Banquet on January 26, 2012.

Officer Fleischhauer is assigned to the MBPD Marine Patrol Unit and was involved in several extraordinary incidents during 2012. The following are the top four incidents for which Officer Fleischhauer was recognized:

Incident #1:

On July 7, 2012, a vessel with a couple on board departed from the Haulover inlet enroute to South Bimini Bahamas. The vessel ran into inclement weather (high winds and 4 to 6 feet seas) and hit a large wave. The impact from this wave caused the transom to rip free from the hull. While the vessel quickly began to take on water, the passengers were able to send a distress call to the U.S. Coast Guard. The vessel eventually capsized leaving the passengers clinging to the hull, drifting in the Gulf Stream current.

Officer Fleischhauer heard the distress call to the U.S. Coast Guard with the last known position, approximately six miles northeast of the Miami Harbor. He recognized the coordinates to be off shore from 40th Street and Miami Beach. Officer Fleischhauer advised that he would be responding and began searching an area further north due to the drift of the Gulf Stream current. After an extensive search, he was able to locate the capsized vessel approximately three miles north of their last known position. He was able to safely rescue the stranded passengers and coordinate with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue for medical care at the Haulover Boat Dock.

Incident #2:

On August 12, 2012, Officer Fleischhauer was patrolling Biscayne Bay in the area of Monument Island when he observed black smoke emitting from the engine compartment of a blue 24 foot Cris Craft bow rider vessel. The vessel's captain was taken onboard the MBPD Marine Patrol vessel. Due to exigent circumstances, the vessel in peril was taken under tow and held into the wind, away from the bridge until Miami-Dade Fire Boat 1 arrived on scene. Further investigation revealed that the vessel had begun to take on water as a result of the intake and exhaust hoses being melted by the fire. Had it not been for Officer Fleischhauer's immediate response, the captain of the burning vessel would have been seriously injured in the fire. Further harm to other boaters and the environment were also mitigated by Officer's Fleischhauer's taking control of the situation and towing the vessel into a safer position.

Incident #3:

The Barry Kutun Boat Ramp is heavily utilized by boaters during the weekend to load and unload their vessels. There is only one ramp and boaters have to be patient and wait their turn. Occasionally, people become impatient and tempers flare. On August 12, 2012, two boaters were involved in a verbal altercation over the use of the ramp. The verbal altercation escalated into a physical altercation when the subject's husband pushed one of the victims. The subject then exited her minivan armed with a .38 caliber revolver. The subject pointed the firearm at the victims while yelling at them. The subject then discharged multiple rounds into the air. Officer Fleischhauer heard the initial shots and exited the Marine Patrol Headquarters building to further investigate. Officer Fleischhauer observed the subject fire several more rounds into the air. Officer Fleischhauer requested emergency back-up and responded to the boat ramp to engage the subject. Upon the arrival of additional officers, the subject was taken into custody without further incident. Officer Fleischhauer was able to help diffuse the situation before anyone was seriously injured.

Incident # 4:

On September 5, 2012, K9 Officer Anderson attended court at 10:30 a.m. Officer Anderson turned on the K9 Deployment and Heat Alert System and left his K9 partner, Jimmy, inside his marked patrol vehicle. The K9 Deployment and Heat Alert System is supposed to monitor the temperature within the vehicle. Should the police vehicle's air conditioning system fail, the K9 Deployment and Heat Alert System activates by making noise with the vehicle horn and prompt the overhead lights and a fan installed in the rear compartment (kennel) to activate. Although there are different statistics on how long it takes for a dog to die in a an overheated car, the majority (including PETA) says it takes about 15 minutes when the car is parked in the sun on a 78 degree or hotter day. This tool is life-saving, to say the least, considering the extreme heat in South Florida.

Officer Fleischhauer was attending court at the same location at 10:15 a.m. As he was leaving the courthouse, he saw the K9 Deployment and Heat Alert system was activated on Officer Anderson's vehicle. He also observed smoke emitting from the hood of the vehicle. Realizing time was of the essence; Officer Anderson was able to find an officer in possession of a "slim jim" and quickly began the process of unlocking the car door. Officer Fleischhauer unlocked the door, rolled down all the windows and shut off the car. By this time, Officer Anderson who had been notified by the Court Liaison Office, responded to his vehicle. K9 Jimmy was extracted from the vehicle, out of breath and weak, but in good spirits.

Officer Fleischhauer had planned to shatter the driver's window to gain entry and rescue K9 Jimmy if he hadn't been able to locate a slim jim device. Officer Anderson explained that if that had occurred, there was a significant likelihood that K9 Jimmy would have engaged Officer Fleischhauer. Officer Fleischhauer sincerely stated to Officer Anderson that, "he would have taken the bite to get him out."

Officer Fleischhauer's actions during 2012 saved many lives including potentially saving the life of K9 Jimmy. He never hesitates to put the lives and wellbeing of others before his own safety. He's truly a hero in every definition of the word.

Please join me in congratulating Officer Fleischhauer on his tremendous accomplishments during 2012, and his recognition from the South Florida law enforcement community by honoring him with the LEO Award.

KGB:RAM:tr