



# City of Roanoke E-911 Center

## Memorandum



**To:** Sonya Roman, Department Manager  
**CC:** E911 Staff  
**From:** Joshua Mason, Training Coordinator  
**Date:** 2/14/2019  
**Re:** 2018 Community Involvement Annual Report

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The Community Involvement Annual Report gives the 911 Center an opportunity to survey outside factors in our community that may impact our Department and Public Safety services delivery in general. This report also serves to highlight attended events and track interaction with the citizens of Roanoke.

### Summary of Events:

<b>Program or event type</b>	<b>Number Conducted</b>	<b>Number of people contacted</b>	<b>Feedback Received</b>
Career / Job Fairs	10	247	
911 Tours	1	8	
APCO Conference Presentation	1	25	
Public Safety Fair	1	220	
Kid's Square Children's Museum	5	385	
Pheasant Ridge Village	1	25	

Our CIT members try to thoroughly educate our citizens about our department, technology and processes during presentations. Due to this fact most follow up questions relate to call volume, staffing/scheduling and location reliability. Any questions are immediately addressed during the event to ensure our citizens understanding of the topic. The only exception to this is if a citizen voices a complaint related to our department.

### **Community Education**

We are committed to educating the citizens of Roanoke to ensure understanding of our public safety system and how to best access and use this service. Like most communities we continue to see an increase in cellular phone calls for our services and we have found that the vast majority have misconceptions of how this technology works. Since implementing services such as Text-to-911 in 2016, the department has seen a consistent increase in the number of citizens contacting the department by this method. It is important for the department to continue contact with citizens to ensure their understanding of the benefits and challenges of this technology and other equipment and technologies we utilize. The department also utilized social media as a means of community education by posting information during high priority events such as storms, highlighting technology changes such as the P1 CAD implementation, and

The members of the 911 center and/or the 5 members of the Community Involvement Team participated in a total of 20 events, making contact with approximately 928 people. Our goal for 2017 was to attend 50 or more events. These numbers reflect that we did not meet this goal. Factors impacting participation in events were:

- Reduced staffing levels
- Increased use of overtime to cover shifts
- Less team members
- A steadily improving job-market

These factors all contributed to a decline in community involvement events attended this year. The team's goal for 2019 will be to refocus on community meetings and other opportunities to engage the citizens of Roanoke by attending at least 35 events.

## **Social Media**

The 911 center launched a department Facebook page in March of 2015. In 2017, we had approximately over 2,100 likes. By the end of 2018 we had added nearly 400 additional likes. We have utilized the page to push out general information to our citizens, during severe weather events and to share special events such as groundbreaking on the new center, P1 CAD training and deployment, and other activities related to the center. Much of the increase in followers is contributed to high quality content and strategic posting days and times.

We include a statement on our Facebook page advising citizens not to use Facebook as a means of reporting an emergency to the department. We will continue to work closely with the City of Roanoke office of Citizen Engagement to enhance and improve our social media exposure.

Our use of social media in 2018 led to higher post engagement than any previous year. Our average post reached nearly 1,000 people and helped to keep them informed, in real-time, of job fairs, special projects, etc. we were involved in. This increase in post engagement has shown that our use of social media can be as effective as more traditional community involvement functions.

## **Media Requests**

In 2018, other than basic media requests related to calls for service, we received four media requests. In March, WDBJ7 requested to do a story about EMS abuse. In July, WDBJ7, WSL10, and WFCR27, covered the ground breaking ceremony for our new E-911 center. In September, we hosted a media briefing with the department of Emergency Management, concerning the local impacts of Hurricane Florence.

## **Recruitment Events**

We will continue to work with our Human Resources Department to expand our departments' efforts to attend both local and regional recruitment opportunities. Our team members who attend these recruitment events will continue to receive specialized training in this area.

## **Translation Services**

The Hispanic population in the City of Roanoke increased to 5.5 percent as of the Decennial Census Count, April 1, 2010. The E-911 center utilizes Voiance to assist us with interpretation on a multitude of languages. In 2018 we had a total of 445 calls requiring an interpreter. 409 of those calls were for Spanish translation for a total of 92 percent of requests. In 2017 we had a total of 612 calls requiring an interpreter. 541 of those calls were for Spanish translation for a total of 88 percent of requests. We had translation requests for a total of 14 different languages in 2018. The second highest demand of translation services was Swahili with 7 calls or just over 1.5 percent of total calls. These numbers reflect that our total number of calls has decreased. The numbers reflect calls requiring Spanish interpreters decreased by 132 calls compared to 2017. However, the percentage of calls requiring translations services for Spanish increased by four percent.

It should also be noted that the use of translation services is useful to track multi-cultural requests for service but does not accurately reflect the true composition or percentage of callers. Some of the requests for service may be from other cultures however the caller or a relative of the caller may communicate well enough in English to not require translation services through a language service. It should also be noted that foreign language speaking families living in the City of Roanoke may have school aged children who are bilingual and can translate for family members.

We will continue to work with the City's Neighborhood Services and Human Resources department to increase our exposure to the Hispanic and other diverse communities.

### **Summation**

Our department saw a contraction in our Community Involvement efforts during this year for a variety of reasons. Though our team members are highly committed to reaching out to our diverse community, we will look at new and different ways to engage the community to increase recruitment efforts and educate citizens about our department and its responsibilities, challenges, accomplishments and technologies used. In spite of the decrease in Community Involvement events, the Community Involvement Team continues to be successful at its core function of raising community awareness as it relates to our department, public safety and the City as a whole. Furthermore, our increased use of social

media has put us contact with a demographic that is largely representative of the City's makeup.