

2022

Firefighter/Paramedic Mark Warmuth
Firefighter/Paramedic Joseph DiFranco

Perry Joint Fire District

Sometimes the unexpected happens. When it does, first responders, unlike civilians, switch gears and go into action, without a thought to the location, time of day, surroundings, and hazards. A switch is thrown inside your brain, and you just take action.

On November 26, 2022, Perry Firefighter/Paramedics Warmuth and DiFranco were faced with that very situation. They had completed an EMS transport to a Cleveland Hospital and were enroute back to Perry. Travelling on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, they encountered a serious head on collision. Outside of their jurisdiction, in a strange and occasionally dangerous area, they were without the benefit of a standard response team to this type of situation, and without their protective turnout gear, yet they immediately went into first responder mode. Quickly notifying Central Communications of their situation and requesting Cleveland's Emergency Response, they each went to one of the involved vehicles to assess the persons involved.

DiFranco went to the involved truck and observed a male, unconscious lying across the front seat. As he was assessing this patient, he came to and exited the truck, refused assistance and began running.

Meanwhile, Warmuth was at the car and found a patient unresponsive with serious leg injuries including a compound fracture. While assessing this driver, the engine compartment burst into flames. DiFranco who was rushing to assist Warmuth, ran back to the ambulance and retrieved a fire extinguisher and other equipment. DiFranco emptied the extinguisher, which caused the fire to subside momentarily, but quickly regained its intensity.

Due to the danger presented, the firefighters made the decision to move the victim. They extricated him and moved him to into the Perry Rescue Squad where Warmuth began to treat him.

DiFranco saw the second driver now seated on the curb and close to the flaming vehicle. The male was now unable to move. DiFranco dragged him away from the danger and performed a trauma assessment which revealed that the male had several broken ribs.

Cleveland Fire and EMS had now arrived on scene and the engine company was extinguishing the fire. One patient was handed off to Cleveland EMS for transport, however, they could not give an ETA for a second ambulance. Warmuth decided that

his patient was in need of a trauma center and decided that they should transport the male to University Hospital Trauma Center in their squad.

Perry Joint Fire District Chief, Dominc Chiappone nominated these two men for the Jorge Medina award. The decisions that they made that evening undoubtedly were instrumental in the survival of these victims. Their actions were certainly above and beyond expectations. The board member of the Lake County Blue Coats are proud to award both men the Jorge Medina Distinguished Service Award.