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Floyd EMT Was a Hero in Fiery Crash

“If I were Tyler Perry I’d write a movie about y’all. If I were Garth Brooks, I’d write a song.”

A grateful mother wrote those words in a Facebook post commending the work of Floyd EMT Desiree Hartmann, Floyd County Police Officer Blake Puckett and other good Samaritans who helped free her daughter from the cab of a burning pickup truck.

The crash happened March 7 around 11 p.m. Desiree had finished an extra shift at Floyd Emergency Medical Services she had volunteered to work, spent time with her family and had picked up her daughter at a skating rink. She was driving home to Calhoun when she saw headlights coming directly toward her in the wrong lane on Georgia Highway 53.

Desiree’s children screamed as she quickly maneuvered her car out of the lane to avoid being struck. The wrong-way car continued, speeding down the wrong side of the four-lane, median-divided highway. Realizing that other drivers were in danger, Desiree called 911, checked on her children, then quickly turned her car around to follow the driver.

Desiree kept dispatchers on the phone, updating them on the driver’s location as she witnessed more close-calls. With 911 still on the line, Desiree then saw the unthinkable happen. The car struck a pick-up truck, head-on, at full speed. The truck immediately erupted in flames. There was no time to wait for emergency responders. She had to help. Desiree pulled safely to the side of the road to keep her children safe, then ran to the scene with no tools or protective gear to better assess the situation.

Desiree first came to the car. The trapped driver was unresponsive, but had a strong heartbeat and was breathing. She then went to the truck. Four young people were inside. Desiree and a passerby helped the stunned truck driver to the side of the road,

away from the flaming vehicles. A Certified Nurse Assistant also had stopped and took over his care. The two then returned to the truck to help the passengers inside. Together, they helped a young man from the truck, then returned and lifted a young woman out of the truck and moved her safely out of the way just as the first police officers and fire department arrived. She told an officer another passenger remained inside the burning truck.

The officer used a pocketknife to cut the seatbelt of the final passenger, who was trapped in the wreckage. He and another passerby worked together to free her, as the truck's windshield gave way and flames began to lick the truck cab. Floyd EMS transported five patients to Floyd Medical Center that night. It was Desiree's voice on the phone that helped 911 to know how many first responders and ambulances would be needed at the scene, and it was her work at the scene that allowed on-duty first responders to act quickly and bring order to the chaotic scene.

Desiree said she saw divine providence at work, that God orchestrated everyone being at the right place at the right time to be able to react, respond and save lives. It is a perfect example of how the 911 system works with citizen first responders, 911, Law Enforcement, Fire and EMS all working together simultaneously to save lives.

The grateful mother's Facebook praise was effusive.

"I've been searching for the right words. I cannot find enough," she wrote. "I cannot find any good enough. Y'all are rock stars, my angels, my heroes. What y'all did that night was way past job and training. The choices you made that night show the people y'all really are inside: truly caring, unselfish people, loving people."

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