

Friday Night [under the] Lights... 2015



Happy Friday...

Sometimes it's really hard for me to put into words exactly what my brain (and my heart) want to say.

Tonight is one of those nights.

It's been a tough few weeks for the global community, our own country, our profession, and all of our AMR family. The unbelievable events in Paris, Colorado Springs and San Bernardino stunned every single one of us, along with our families and our friends. And even though we've collectively chosen to take care of our fellow human beings in the absolute worst of circumstances, stuff like this reaches deep into our being and stirs up a combination of emotions that's hard to even describe.

Anger. Fear. Sadness. Outrage. Mistrust. Confusion. Discomfort. Pride.

Yes. I did say *Pride*.

But I think the events of the past few weeks also grab us by the collar and remind us that our profession and our approaches have now changed forever. Just like September 11th changed us, so too have the events of the past few weeks.

On November 17th at approximately 11:38AM, a gunman who would later be identified as Robert Lewis Dear entered a Planned Parenthood building in Colorado Springs.

Everyone reading this knows what happened next.



It's one of those calls we always think about and hope we never *ever* have to respond to. Frankly, stuff like this has been so rare that most of us feel like the likelihood of it happening in our own world is almost nil.

As is the case in most of these events, the initial information is limited, sometimes inaccurate, frequently changing and almost always conveyed by frantic, petrified callers.



Associated Press

As our colleagues in Colorado Springs quickly deployed and escalated the response, I can only imagine what they were thinking, how they must have felt and the emotional intensity of a confusing and deadly scene.

I remember seeing the text on my phone and immediately searching the news to find out what was happening. A catastrophic event like this feels totally different when you know some of your own are there.

Unfortunately, three people were killed by the time Dear was apprehended. A loss of life that should have never happened and an event that challenged the perspective all of us have on the World of EMS...

But during the news coverage of the event, there was a powerful image that came up frequently on multiple networks that created an interesting sense of order amidst all the chaos ...



Amidst all the confusion, the world saw strength and order. The image screams “we’re ready”.

There’s a common saying in public safety that we go running in when everyone else is running out.

This picture is proof of exactly that.

And then it happened again. On December 2nd, fourteen people were killed and 22 injured in a terrorist attack consisting of a mass shooting (and attempted bombing) at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino.

I was in a meeting and one of our colleagues got up and left the room. Her husband (not in EMS) had been working in the area of the initial reports of a mass shooting.

The initial reports were unfortunately substantiated. In this particular event, the information and escalation was chaotic because of multiple sites and limited details.



For several hours our colleagues were faced with not only the grim reality of multiple fatalities but the continued tension of a rapidly evolving event.

Even when the suspects were “neutralized”, there was still uncertainty about additional threats.

Events like this test our abilities more than just about anything we’re called upon to do. We have to have an intense awareness of our surroundings, be fully engaged with the incident management structure, use appropriate, focused and targeted assessment and treatment skills, make split second high stakes decisions about our patients and be acutely aware of any subtleties which could have horrific implications.

That’s exactly what our San Bernardino colleagues did.

And, once again, a message of strength and readiness for a petrified community...



These events are a wake-up call. Active assailants are now a part of what we do and what we have to prepare for. Unfortunately, there will be more of these. Ramped up intelligence and law enforcement will help substantially, but we now have to come to grips with the fact that we need to focus on how to better prevent, protect and respond.

There is a significant amount of literature that will help guide our preparation and our response. There are also national & international experts who will share their knowledge and skill with us to make us stronger and help harden our approaches.

We have the privilege and responsibility for protecting a population of almost 43 Million people (that's the size of Spain). 14% of the entire U.S. population depends on us to do exactly what our colleagues in Colorado Springs and San Bernardino did.

We also have an obligation to learn quickly, disseminate best practices and ramp up our efforts in the new climate.

Just like we did for Ebola.

Over the next few weeks, we will develop the AMR Active Assailant Resource Center – we'll communicate best practices, lessons learned, strategies and protocols. As we did with Ebola, we'll engage our colleagues with expertise in management of Active Assailants. We'll learn from the San Bernardino, Colorado Springs and Boston Marathon critiques. And as we also did with Ebola, we'll make everything we create available to anyone that wants it.

We'll use some of the same communications tools we used in Ebola to make sure we get info out as widely as we can.

We're all in this together.

And, a personal note in a public forum specifically for our colleagues in the Springs and San Bernardino...

I can't even begin to imagine how you must have felt, how your emotions and your training and experience mixed up the perfect approach for what was an unfathomable event. I'm not sure exactly how I would have handled things had I been in your shoes.

I hope you know that the collective arms of your 26,188 colleagues wrap around you and hold you tightly. If I was there with you right now, I'd grab your hand, look into your eyes and tell you how much what you did (and how you did it) means to not only your neighbors, but to all of us who watched from afar.

I'm comforted that every one of you came home safely that day and now have the opportunity to help us better understand and harden our response.

I'm proud of you. And I'm proud to be your colleague. You made what was probably the worst day those people have ever experienced the best that it could be...



Daniel Owen/The Gazette via AP

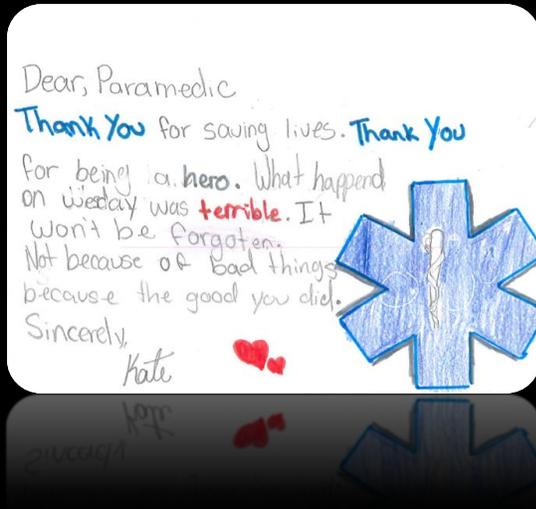


A Glimpse of the World of AMR...

Thanks to Renee Colarossi [AMR GM San Bernardino] for tonight's Glimpse of our World.

60 Middle School students sent them cards...

I think Kate says it best...

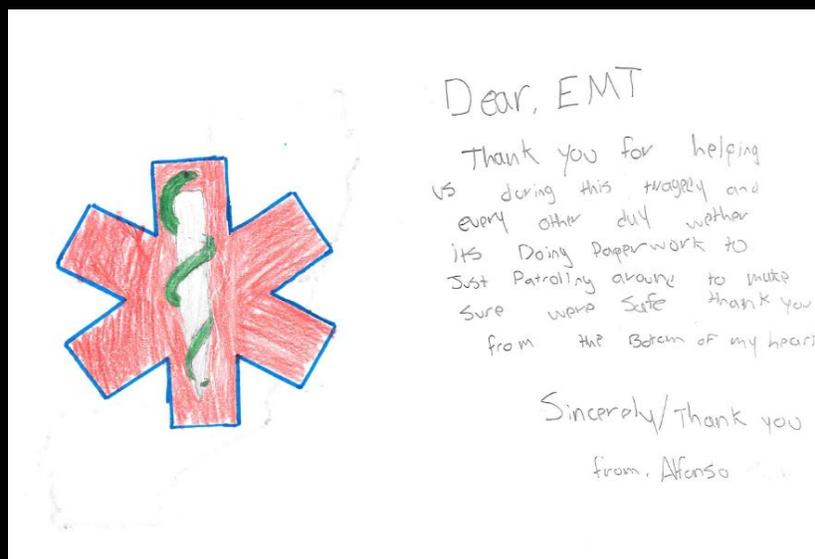


And finally...

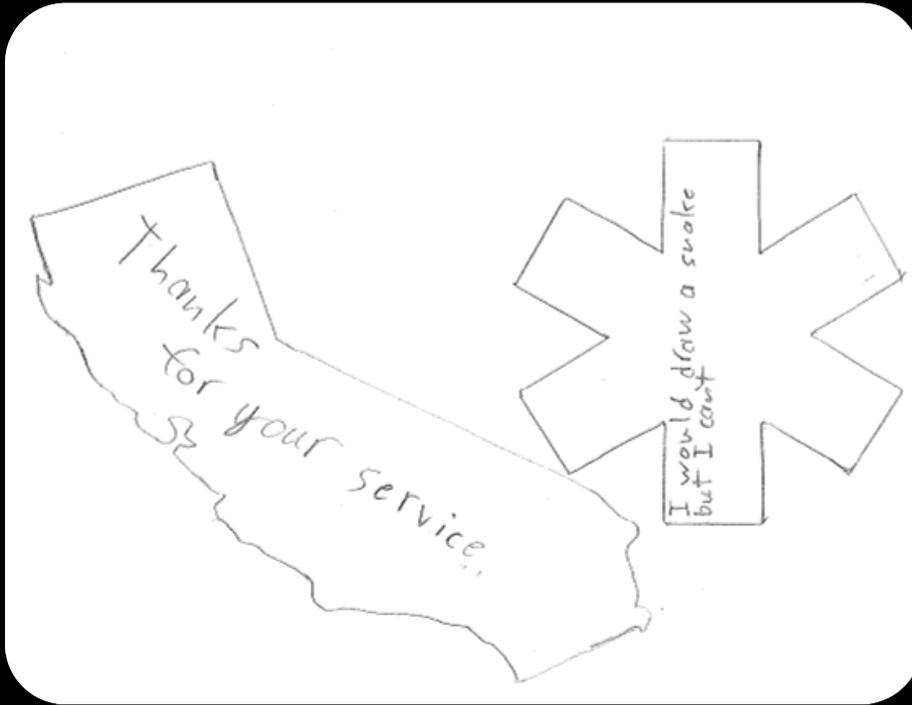
I'll end tonight just as I started it – **Happy Friday.**

While it may sound odd given what we've just discussed, please don't ever, ever forget that we can't lose sight of the fact that living our life and having fun is what it's all about. Don't let even the toughest of times derail that...

And alas, we've even found someone that appreciates our paperwork!



Epilogue...



That's it from my world. *Happy Friday.*

Hug the ones you love.

Ed

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