



Office of the  
County Executive

EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE  
DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



*"Kites rise  
highest against  
the wind,  
not with it."  
- Winston  
Churchill*

## HIGH RISERS

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***"Kites rise highest against the wind, not with it."*** - Winston Churchill

This week we are recognizing a new group of High Risers who have risen above the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic: Captain Ben Kaufman; Phil McLaughlin; Teddy Ramet; Stephanie Sawyer; Shann Fanwar; Chris Leins; Tim Bungato, David Owens; Thomas Tippet; and Richard Greenwood.



Our employees have faced the COVID-19 headwinds head-on and risen above the turbulence. There have been speedbumps, but our employees have turned problems into solutions and roadblocks into detours. None of this has been easy, and we know it won't get easier. We know that our team will continue to do what they have done from the beginning, which is to figure things out and make it work.

These employees have: developed a dashboard to assist County leadership and management assess and respond to COVID-19; converted unused trucks scheduled to be sold in an auction into refrigerated trucks that transported food to community members in need; provided necessary training to help launch the Public Health Emergency Grants which provided funding for small businesses, refined Ride On schedules throughout the many changes in transportation services; and coordinated

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service Emergency Medical Service Duty Officers.

Each of the employees perform different jobs but it is their common strengths of flexibility and determination that define them as High Risers.

COVID-19 came suddenly, and without a training manual. We moved forward knowing we needed to keep our employees and community members safe while still providing services to our community. There have been and will continue to be challenges but together we will continue to figure things out.

Throughout the pandemic, there have been thousands of employees who deserve recognition. While each week we recognize some employees as High Risers, we know there are many more. We look forward to continuing to recognize more of you for the extraordinary work you do.

Thank you for making MCG the best. The work you do is making a difference and saving lives.

Stay safe and be well,

Marc Elrich, County Executive  
Andrew Kleine, Chief Administrative Officer

**HIGH RISER BEN KAUFMAN**



During the pandemic, Captain Ben Kaufman has done an outstanding job of coordinating the activities of the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Duty Officers.

Captain Kaufman has worked long hours, without days off, to ensure timely information is disseminated quickly. He held daily conference calls to keep all staff members current on changing information.

His efforts to build strong relationships with county hospital managers and EMS leaders from surrounding jurisdictions enhanced regional communication. His knowledge of communications and staffing software functions allowed him to provide informed recommendations to assist MCFRS to develop COVID-19 response plans.

His work included providing the guiding framework for the present enhancements at the Emergency Communications Center, whereby an EMS Duty Officer monitors hospital utilization and determines the receiving hospital choice for every ambulance transport. Ben also worked with other FRS staff members and the FRS Medical Director to develop and implement clinical practice changes to improve the care of COVID-19 patients.

**HIGH RISER PHIL MCLAUGHLIN**



Phil McLaughlin has been an invaluable resource for the COVID-19 response.

Starting in mid-March, at least five rounds of adjustments to Ride On schedules have been required. His quick work provided community members with accurate schedules

Phil has led his service planning team through long hours of work to develop new, flexible schedules and adjust the underlying work and fleet assignments needed to support these public schedules.

By updating the MCDOT communications tools and implementing new operating models, he has efficiently improved the changing nature of public transportation as demanded by the changing nature of the public health response.

Phil is now turning his attention to how Ride On service can be restored to meet our residents travel needs as businesses and activities resume during the recovery.

**RISER TEDDY RAMET**



The responsive and knowledgeable support provided by Human Resources Specialist Teddy Ramet has enabled the Office of Human Resources (OHR) to respond effectively to the many ongoing challenges faced by County employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a member of the OHR Training and Organizational Development team, Teddy championed the use of Microsoft Teams as a technological solution to help County training presenters Turn the “Learning” Curve in transition from in-person training classes to County-wide virtual webinars, ensuring that vital training programs were immediately available for all County employees.

Teddy has provided extensive, hands-on technical assistance and training to numerous County employees on how to effectively present information at virtual meetings and training programs. He has responded to constantly changing needs and tight timelines with a positive, collaborative attitude. His work to support the County’s speedy changeover to a fast-paced, virtual-learning transformation was markedly easier due to Teddy’s dedication and innovation.

**HIGH RISER STEPHANIE SAWYER**



Stephanie Sawyer, with the Department of Finance, has worked long hours, without time off, since the beginning of the County's COVID-19 recovery response.

Stephanie trained personnel to properly and securely use the direct purchase order (DPO) process for the County's Public Health Emergency Grants. Implemented in April, the grant program provides financial support to small businesses, which have experienced significant financial loss caused directly, or indirectly, by COVID-19.

While working on these DPOs, she assumed much of the responsibilities for the Office of Finance's contract work, providing key assistance and guidance to multiple agencies to offer services such as hoteling public health and public safety personnel for the County's COVID-19 response.

Stephanie diligence and willingness to work extra hours ensured the DPO process worked properly. This made it possible to get funds to struggling businesses more expediently by the work she put into the training and implementation of the DPO process.

**HIGH RISER THOMAS TIPPETT**



Thomas Tippett, a Performance Management and Data Analyst with the CountyStat Team within Office of Management and Budget, has spent the majority of his time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic designing, building, and refining data dashboards for County leadership and the public to visualize and track metrics related to the crisis and our response. He effectively collaborated with people at various levels government, including across the county, the region, and at the state, to create one of the best examples in the nation of a public [dashboard](#) to report and track data relevant to the virus and its impact.

This important dashboard provides the public with data related to the pandemic. It is the tool used by County Executive March Elrich, County Health Officer Travis Gayles, and other decision-makers to inform and guide Montgomery County's response, recovery and re-opening of our communities and businesses.

**HIGH RISER HEAVY EQUIPMENT SERVICES TEAM**



Shann Fanwar, Chris Leins, Tim Bungato, David Owens, Richard Greenwood of the Department of General Services Heavy Services Fleet Management Division is recognized for their resourcefulness in putting back into service decommissioned beer trucks converting them into food delivery vehicles.

Soon after COVID-19 hit our community, food supply and delivery became a critical public health need. At that time, the County did not have a supply of refrigerated trucks suited for food delivery. The resourcefulness of the team made it possible to take something that was out of service and use it to support and assist a large community need.

The team responded, under a very tight time schedule, to repurpose two former Alcohol Beverage Service refrigerator trucks which were to-be-disposed vehicles. The trucks would have gone to the public auction if they had not been converted to service the food banks. This innovation made it possible to get perishables and other temperature-sensitive foods to community members that had been hard-hit by the pandemic.

The trucks required extensive repair under very tight timelines. The team spent many hours to meet the need and timeline successfully. To-date the trucks have been utilized to complete a great many food deliveries.

