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NEWS > LOCAL NEWS > FORT WORTH Monday, Jun 15, 2009

## Fort Worth

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# DFW youngsters receive awards for helping save relatives

BY YAMIL BERARD  
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Melissa Darmon of Burleson was using a large hammer to try to repair a country fence to keep her dogs from chasing the neighbor's cows.

The 6-foot-tall mom, who is a second-degree karate black belt, thought she could slam the post hold with ease. But something went wrong. The heavy metal object ricocheted and slammed into her head, she said.

In the next 30 minutes, her three children, ages 14, 11 and 9, flew into action. They called their father, Richard, to come home from work. Michael, 11, summoned paramedics and spoke with dispatcher Yolanda Chandler of the Johnson County Sheriff's Department.

Jessica, 14, wrapped towels around her mother's wound and held her mother's head in her lap. David, 9, went outside and blocked the broken fence so the dogs wouldn't get away.

"About 300 pounds hit me in the head," Melissa Darmon said. "At that point I realized I should have been dead. . . . It was truly a miracle. It was just lovely to see how all my family came together."

For their acts of courage, the three Darmon children will be among the eight youths and six 911 dispatchers to receive the 9-1-1 Local Heroes Medal of Honor at 6 p.m. today at the Fort Worth Convention Center. The ceremony will take place during the National Emergency Number Association conference and trade show.

The award is given by 9-1-1 for Kids, a California organization that educates children and the public about emergency calls. Special guests at the event include Dallas Cowboys fullback Deon Anderson and nose tackle Jay Ratliff.

The award recognizes a young person who makes a successful 911 call and a 911 dispatcher who has "distinguished himself or herself by gallantry," officials said.

Dispatchers to be honored include Sandra Tatum of the Highland Village Police Department and MedStar EMS dispatchers Stephen Biasatti, Kimberly Geiger, Angela Penic and Destiny Judd.

"The men and women who answer these calls for help, gathering essential information and dispatching the appropriate assistance, can often make the difference between life and death for persons in need. They are truly real heroes," NENA President Ron Bonneau said Saturday.

The youth heroes are being recognized for staying calm during a life-threatening situation and getting medical attention for a parent or sibling in crisis.

Jocelyn Hurtado of Highland Village is one example. The 8-year-old dialed 911 when her mother was having difficulty breathing and could not move her hands or legs.

Imazhane Wright, 11, of Forest Hill called for help when her 10-year-old brother had a seizure.

Karen Gonzalez, 10, of Fort Worth came home from school and found her mother unconscious and foaming at the mouth. She was the only one at home who could speak English with the dispatcher. She helped keep her mother's airway open until paramedics arrived.

Sara Evans, 6, of Burleson and Amber Baird, 8, of Fort Worth both called 911 when their moms were having seizures.

"I'm proud of her," said April Baird, Amber's mom.

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The Darmons said they were amazed to be recognized as heroes.

"I just found out about it 10 minutes ago — wow," Jessica Darmon said. "I didn't know I'd be getting anything for this."

Michael Darmon, who placed the call while his siblings were helping Mom, said: "I feel honored. It feels weird."

Local law enforcement officials will also attend.

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