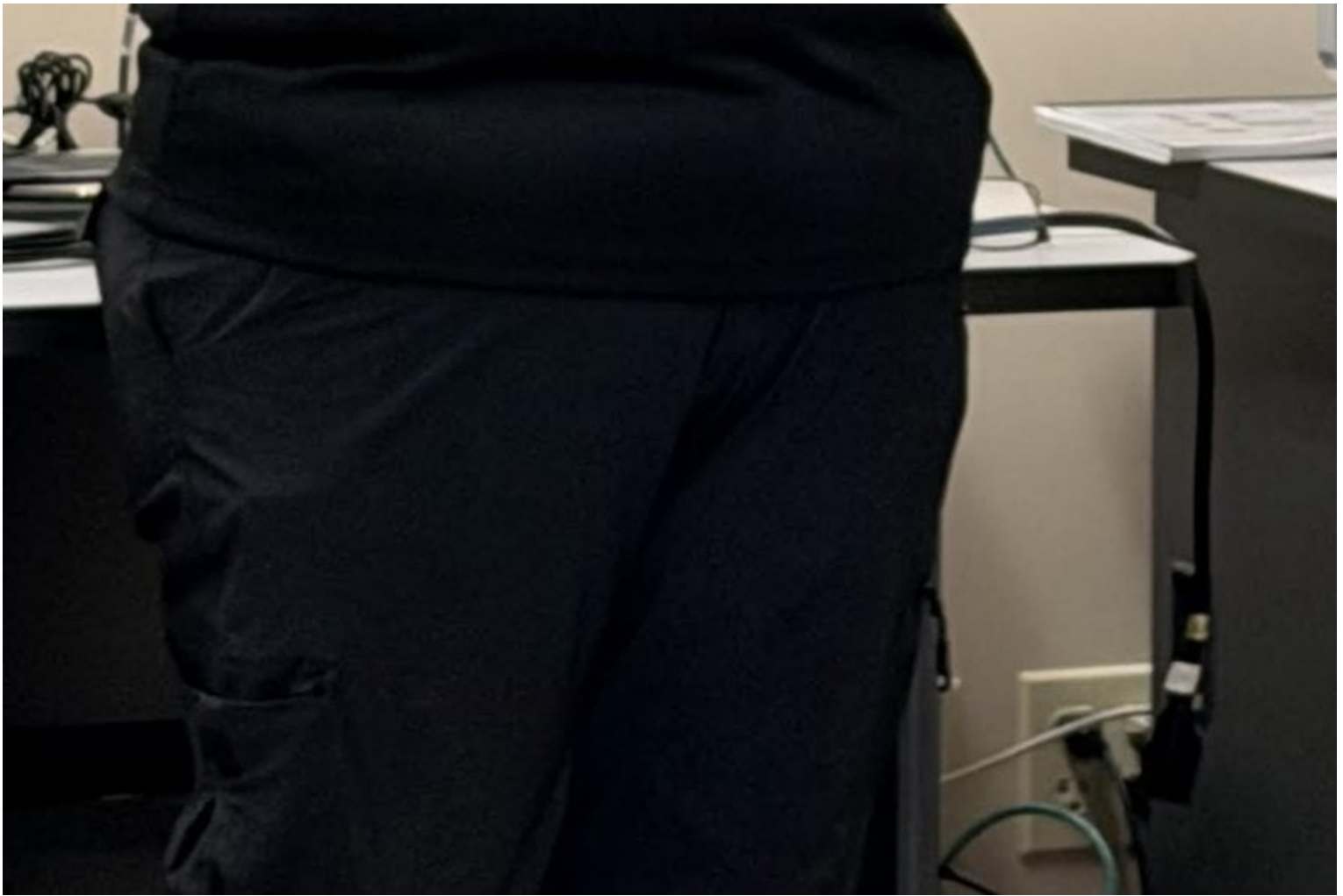


Answering The Call: Granite City Telecommunicator Earns ETSB Scholarship

by Staff Report

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GRANITE CITY - A Granite City telecommunicator will head to Springfield this fall as the first recipient of a Madison County Emergency Telephone System Board scholarship created to invest in the people behind the 911 call.

911 Director Arron Weber recognized Ruby Valenzuela of the Granite City Police Department and presented her with a certificate during the board's monthly meeting Thursday. The scholarship covers registration and lodging for the annual 911/Illinois Public Safety Telecommunicators Association conference.

"We want to be there to help support those agencies that we can," Weber said. "This is a great thing."

ETSB established the scholarship earlier this year to expand training opportunities for telecommunicators who may not otherwise attend conferences because of agency budgets or staffing needs.

Applicants needed at least two years of experience, good standing with their agencies and an essay explaining why they wanted to attend and what they hoped to gain from the experience.

Six telecommunicators submitted essays.

Weber removed applicants' names and agency references before he, longtime ETSB member George Perica and the board's training administrator independently reviewed the submissions.

After spending about a week with the essays, the three met to compare their top choices. Each picked essay No. 2.

"We went through every single one of them, one by one," Weber said.

The unanimous choice belonged to Valenzuela.

Weber said her essay demonstrated a passion for the 911 profession, commitment to her coworkers and a desire to strengthen her skills. Valenzuela focused on emerging technologies, training and mental health awareness among 911 professionals.

"Her focus on taking what she learns and sharing it with others is exactly the type of professional growth we hope to encourage with this scholarship," Weber said.

Valenzuela will join Madison County 911 representatives at the conference later this year, where Weber said she will have an opportunity to gain knowledge she can bring back to her agency and fellow telecommunicators.

"We can't wait to see you up in Springfield," Weber said. "We're going to have a good time, but we're going to learn a lot."