

Dispatcher Lucille Manning



Longtime Police Dispatcher still finds job challenging, exciting.

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From time to time, the Record will profile the staff of the Georgetown Police Department in order to introduce its members to the community. Here is the latest in that series. This week's profile features police dispatcher Lucille Manning.

Nobody ever said that being the eyes and ears for the Georgetown Police Department would be an easy job. In all likelihood, Lucille Manning knew that when she became a police dispatcher in Georgetown 19 years ago.

Still, even with nearly two decades of experience under her belt, the average work day remains as challenging as ever for Manning. It may be stressful, but it certainly isn't boring.

"It's not like what you see on TV with the 911 operator just sitting around and waiting for someone to call," says Manning, who has lived in Georgetown for 32 years. "You're always multitasking. You have to know everything that's going on and you're an information center and a direction center."

—That's the part of Manning's job that has stayed relatively constant during her 19 years as a Georgetown police dispatcher. While advancements in technology - such as the all-new dispatch center recently installed by Police Chief James Mulligan - have changed certain aspects of her job, Manning says she always remains challenged at work, mainly because the nature of police work is just as challenging now as it was 19 years ago.

"It was always a complicated job but it wasn't as involved as it is now," says Manning. "It's a very challenging job. You have to be able to think very quickly."

For Manning, spending nearly 20 years as a nurse at Lawrence Hospital before joining the Georgetown Police Department served as the perfect precursor to her current position. ("I went from one tense job to another," she chuckles.) Both jobs forced her to think quickly and clearly in an emergency, and they each put her face to face with the general public in serious situation.

As a police dispatcher, however, Manning (and her fellow dispatchers) is essentially the very first person the public sees or talks to when dealing with the Georgetown police. It's a lot of responsibility, but Manning says she doesn't back down from it.

"Sometimes your adrenaline is really going because you've got to think on your feet and still try to contact all the people you need for a specific call," says Manning. "There are days when it can be quiet and there are days when the phone just doesn't stop."

Needless to say, Manning has fielded every kind of phone call imaginable during her years on the job. With calls ranging from frightening (house fires, domestic disputes) to laughable (people asking for the Red Sox score), Manning has heard it all. More often than not, the calls she gets require serious attention, but every now and then even she has to scratch her head at some of the crazier calls.

"There are times when you really wonder what people are thinking," she says. "But you always have to be nice."

There are days when Manning says she's a little amazed that she's still stationed at the front desk of the Georgetown Public Safety building - especially since she didn't necessarily envision the job as being long-term when she first took it.

It just shows that you never really can predict where you'll be in 20 years. For Manning, she's exactly where she was 20 years ago.

And for now, that's just fine with her.

"I don't know why, but I didn't think I'd still be here (in two decades)," says Manning. "It just seemed too far away. Nobody knows what they're going to be doing then."

"But I enjoy it because it's still so challenging," she adds. "It's another way of meeting people in town. We see a lot of sides of people, the good and the bad. But most of it's good."