

Meeting Date
08/09/16



AGENDA	
Section	Awards
Item No.	I.B.

AGENDA REPORT
BREVARD COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT:	Recognition and Award of "Brevard's Best" to Transit Services Employee, Tara Cotton
DEPT/OFFICE:	Community Services Group / Transit Services Department

Requested Action:

It is requested that the Board of County Commissioners recognize Tara Cotton, Transit Services employee, as a recipient of the "Brevard's Best" Award.

Summary Explanation & Background:

On May 30, 2016, Tara Cotton was completing her shift as the Closing Lead at the Melbourne Transit Services Terminal, when a distraught young woman banged on the door and threatened to kill herself. One of the mechanics called 911, as Tara stepped outside with Vehicle Operator, Patricia Gilfus. They saw the woman pacing back and forth, crying and saying that she was going to kill herself. Tara stepped back to observe the woman, not knowing if she had a weapon or would attempt to harm anyone.

The woman then took off her belt and hung herself from the 6-foot fence. Tara acted quickly, using a knife to cut the belt and thereby saving her life. The Melbourne Police and ambulance arrived and took the woman into their care.

Tara has been hailed as a hero and County Commissioner, Jim Barfield said of Tara, "We never know the impacts that we make on people. You not only saved a life, but you prevented heartbreak on untold others. You have prevented a casualty due to mental illness."

Great job Tara!

Name: Jim Liesenfelt, Transit Services Director
Phone: 635-7815 ext. 601

Clerk to the Board Instructions:

Exhibits Attached: Brevard's Best Award

Contract /Agreement (If attached): Reviewed by County Attorney Yes No PR

County Manager	Deputy County Manager	Department Director / Extension
Stockton Whitten	Assistant County Manager Venetta Valdengo	James P. Liesenfelt, Transit Services Director Jim.Liesenfelt@brevardcounty.us/ (321) 635-7815 ext. 601



Tammy Rowe, Clerk to the Board, 400 South Street • P.O. Box 999, Titusville, Florida 32781-0999

Telephone: (321) 637-2001
Fax: (321) 264-6972
Tammy.Rowe@brevardclerk.us

August 10, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jim Liesenfelt, Transit Services Director

RE: Item I.B., Board Recognition of Transit Services Employee Tara Cotton for "Brevard's Best Award"

The Board of County Commissioners, in regular session on August 9, 2016, recognized Transit Services Employee Tara Cotton as a recipient of the "Brevard's Best Award".

Your continued cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
SCOTT ELLIS, CLERK

for Donna Scott
Tammy Rowe, Deputy Clerk
/dt



Brevard County



2015-2022-JUL-11-15

Excellence in Action

Name of Award Brevard's Best

Nominee Tara Cotton

Dept./Location Transit Services

Nominator Jim Liesenfelt

Phone 321-635-7815

Dept./Location Transit Services

(See back of Form for instructions and award criteria)

Reason(s) for Recommendation: (use additional sheets as necessary)

On May 30, 2016, Tara Cotton

was finishing her shift as the closing lead at the Melbourne Terminal, when a distraught young woman banged on the the door and threatened to kill herself. One of the mechanics called 911, as Tara stepped outside with vehicle operator Patricia Gilfus. They saw the woman pacing back and forth, crying and saying she was going to kill herself. Tara stepped back to observe the woman, not knowing if she had a weapon or was going to harm anyone. The woman took off her belt and hung herself from the 6-foot fence. Tara acted quickly and used a knife to cut the belt thereby saving her life. The Melbourne Police and ambulance arrived and took the woman into their care. We are so proud of Tara Cotton, she saw someone in trouble and went out and helped them.

PROGRAM CRITERIA STATEMENT

To commend the STARS in our Organization for extraordinary employee efforts, consistently superior performance, and/or excellence in action.

Nomination Meets Criteria Statement

Nominator's Signature

Date 6-27-16

FORWARD TO REVIEWER

REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:

Meets criteria

Does not meet criteria

Date Reviewed: JUL - 5 2016

Reviewer's Signature

Forward to:

Supervisor	Department Director (or Designee)	County Manager	Human Resources
Job Well Done Award	Extra Mile Award Pulling Together Award Excellence in Customer Service Bright Idea Award	Exceptional Cooperation Award Brevard's Best Award Diversity Workforce Achievement Award Volunteer Service Award	Safety Effectiveness Award Employee Service Award Retirement Recognition



BREVARD COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

**INTER-OFFICE
MEMORANDUM**

To: Vanetta Valdango, Assistant County Manager, Brevard County

From: Allison Matteson, Office of Human Resources 

Date: July 12, 2016

Subject: Excellence in Action Program
Brevard's Best

CONGRATULATIONS!!

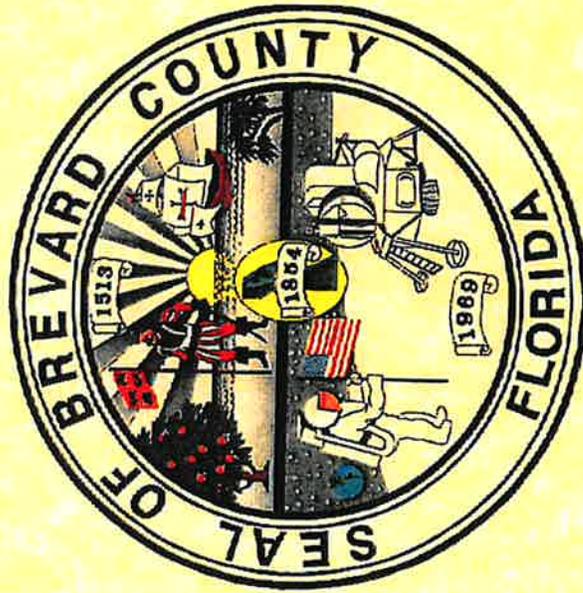
One of your County employees has been presented the **Brevard's Best**. Please join me in applauding **Tara Cotton**. As such, **Tara** is entitled to **8 hours of administrative leave**. To take the leave, the employee needs to get approval and coordinate the date and time with their supervisor and attach a copy of this letter to their timesheet.

The approved, original nomination form will be placed in Tara's personnel file in the Office of Human Resources. When the employee uses the administrative leave, please use the EIA code if hourly or the EIS code if salaried.

Thank you for supporting a climate of excellence.

Copy: Tara Cotton ✓

*Brevard County
Board of County Commissioners*



***Brevard's Best
Excellence in Action Program***

This award is presented to

Tara Cotton

***in recognition of extra effort and
superior performance***

July 12, 2016

Date

Vanetta Valdango

Vanetta Valdango, Assistant County Manager, Brevard County

Brevard transit worker saves woman from suicide attempt



Chris Bonanno, FLORIDA TODAY 10:24 a.m. EDT June 4, 2016



(Photo: Tara Cotton)

The heroism of a Space Coast Area Transit employee helped save a woman's life earlier this week.

Tara Cotton, a 31-year-old lead operator with the bus agency, says she was finishing up her shift on Tuesday, May 30, when she heard some banging outside of their terminal at 460 S. Harbor City Boulevard around 9:30 p.m.

When Cotton stepped outside, she saw a woman in the parking lot in distress.

"I came outside, and we were standing, and she was pacing probably within a 10-foot walk just back and forth, crying and saying how she was going to kill herself, she couldn't do it anymore," said Cotton. "...I guess she yelled at the mechanics to call the police."



FLORIDA TODAY

Four sisters killed in Brevard I-95 Memorial Day crash

[\(http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/local/2016/05/30/breaking-rollover-crash-fatality-crash/85172964/\)](http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/local/2016/05/30/breaking-rollover-crash-fatality-crash/85172964/)

The mechanics, did just that as the woman attempted to take her own life, according to Melbourne Police Department Cmdr. Dan Lynch, who also noted that the woman prior to her suicide attempt.

"She called in and said she was going to shoot herself," said Lynch. We wanted to respond and in the meantime, she took off her belt and put it around her neck and tried to hang herself from the fence."

While Cotton stayed back from the woman initially not knowing "if she had a weapon or she wanted to harm anybody," she sprang to action as she hung herself from what she described as "about a 6-foot fence."

"Initially I tried to just get the belt free, like loose from the fence but that wasn't working," said Cotton.

Using a pocket knife, Cotton was able to get the woman down.

Cotton estimated that she was hanging for "less than a minute."



FLORIDA TODAY

SUVs collide in Suntree: one overturns into ditch

[\(http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/local/2016/05/28/vehicle-overtums-suntree-florida-crash-traffic/85087756/\)](http://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/local/2016/05/28/vehicle-overtums-suntree-florida-crash-traffic/85087756/)

Melbourne Police arrived a short time after and took the woman into custody.

Space Coast Area Transit Director Jim Liesenfelt had nothing but praise for Cotton.

"First of all, I was speechless," said Liesenfelt. "She just went up and did it. She saw somebody in trouble and went out and helped them. She's a good person."

Still, Cotton doesn't see herself as a hero, despite her actions.

"It's kind of surreal. People keep calling me a hero and I don't necessarily see it like that," said Cotton.

She also expressed hope that the woman she saved would get better soon. Police took her from the scene, and Lynch said she was involuntarily committed under Florida's Baker Act and taken to Circles of Care locally.

"Hopefully they can get the help that they need. I'm proud that I actually stepped in and did something," she added.

Contact Bonanno at 321-242-3662, cbonanno@floridatoday.com (<mailto:cbonanno@floridatoday.com>) or follow Chris on Twitter [@FTChrisBonanno](https://twitter.com/FTChrisBonanno) (<http://twitter.com/ftchrisbonanno>).

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