

City of Poulsbo

Housing, Health and Human Services Department



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 25, 2021

Contact: Kim Hendrickson, City of Poulsbo Housing, Health and Human Services
360-394 9794

Title: Seattle Mariners Recognize Poulsbo Fire CARES Team as Hometown Heroes

Firefighter Dave Musselman and Community Support Specialist Renee Miller will be named as Hometown Heroes by the Seattle Mariners during their August 28 and 29 games against the Kansas City Royals. Firefighter Musselman and Dr. Miller are being recognized for their work with Poulsbo Fire CARES—an innovative program, based out of the Poulsbo Fire Department, that assists people throughout North Kitsap who are struggling with addiction, mental illness, cognitive decline, and other behavioral health issues.

“Poulsbo Fire CARES has been very successful since its implementation earlier this year” says Poulsbo Fire Deputy Chief Jeff Russell. “While on emergency scenes, it is great to see our police officers and firefighters routinely consider if a community member might benefit from the CARES team. Referrals from our first responders to CARES is common now as our crews see the benefits of the program. We have been surprised by the number of elderly community members who have a need for CARES support. Often we find senior citizens who are not able to truly advocate for themselves, do not have friends or family to assist, and have trouble accessing resources. Even under pandemic conditions and restrictions, the CARES team service level has not been negatively impacted.”

“I am so proud of Dave and Renee and the work they do to help our residents,” says Poulsbo Mayor Becky Erickson. “The team gets to know people who are isolated, vulnerable, and lack access to the care that they need. We’ve seen, in the first eight months of the program, that their supportive, proactive approach makes a real difference in people’s lives, especially when COVID has forced other providers to reduce their services. I’m so glad they are out there giving personalized assistance at a time that’s so stressful for everyone.”

Hometown Heroes is a season-long tribute to the first responders, health care professionals, grocery workers and others on the front lines who have helped their communities through the COVID-19 pandemic. Firefighter Musselman, who has been with Poulsbo Fire for 22 years, will be honored on Saturday August 28. Dr. Miller, who has worked as a counselor, coach, and advocate, will be honored on Sunday August 29. Both were given free tickets and plan to bring

their families to the game. "I'm really looking forward to Saturday," says Firefighter Musselman. "I'm feeling like the 2021 CARES team is like the 2021 Mariners: we face a lot of challenges but we're in it to win it."

"Meeting people in crisis where they are and helping them get their feet back under them has truly been an honor" says Dr. Miller. "Hearing from our community members that they are thankful when we show up at the right time with the right help tells me that we are doing the right work."

The Kitsap County Commissioners awarded the City of Poulsbo and Poulsbo Fire \$305,000 to operate the 2021 Fire CARES program. Funding is from the County's one-tenth of one percent "treatment tax" fund that has funded programs since 2015. Fire CARES services are available throughout North Kitsap. For more information, see the Fire CARES website at <https://www.poulsbofirecares.com/>