

ROOKIE MAKES DRAMATIC GWB SAVE

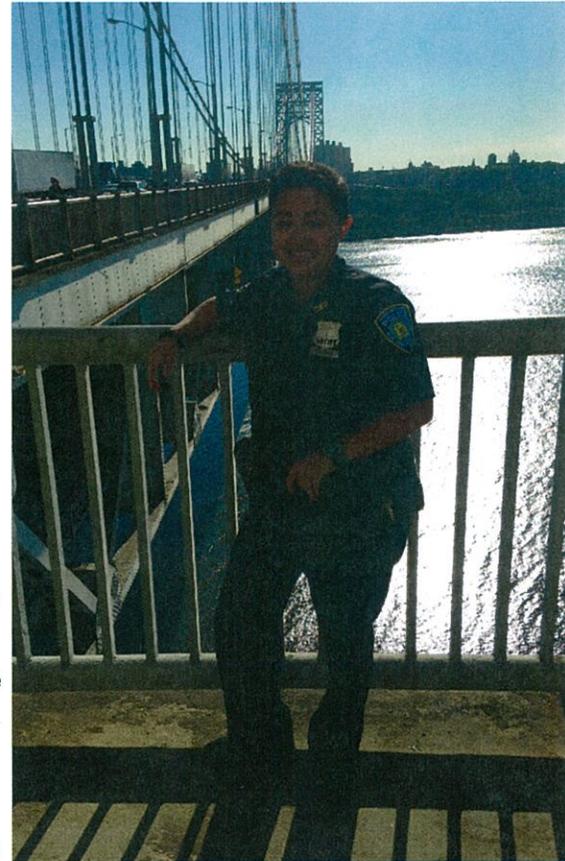
"And on her fourth day she saved a man's life." That could be part of the opening sentence in the biography of Probationary Police Officer Katherine Acevedo if one was to be written.

Acevedo, a recent graduate of the Port Authority Police Academy, began her probationary period assigned to the George Washington Bridge Police Command. On Saturday, September 13, 2014, Acevedo, known as Katie, was working her fourth day of patrol after completing her OJT tours. On that day Katie successfully prevented a man from throwing himself off the George Washington Bridge to the waters of the Hudson River far below. Not bad for a rookie who admits to having an aversion to heights.

Acevedo remembers it was a bit past 8AM when she took a position on the bridge's south walkway just before the New Jersey tower. With her back to the railing she observed the bike riders, runners and tourists with their cameras on the famous pedestrian thoroughfare. Nice weather and interesting people make for a pleasant foot beat on a Saturday morning but, as every cop who has worked the GWB knows, the walkway has a dark side; a draw for emotionally disturbed people intent on harming themselves. It wasn't long before Acevedo came face to face with one such person.

Acevedo said she was watching the bike riders go by and people taking pictures when a man wearing a backpack and walking very slow caught her attention. "He was clutching the straps of his backpack the way a child would", she said. It sort of reminded her of that unsure way a kindergartner approaches school on the first day, Acevedo offered as an explanation for what she perceived from the man. She added that the man kept looking at her while also, at the same time, trying to avoid eye contact with the officer. The man's actions caused Acevedo enough concern to begin following him while he periodically glanced back at her.

Acevedo recalled at one point, just as they passed the New Jersey tower, the man stopped, turned and faced her. Officer Acevedo took this opportunity to engage the man in conversation and began asking random questions. As he answered her inquiries in a melancholy fashion Acevedo noticed, what she described as, a hollowness in his eyes. Acevedo's concern began to rise and radioed for another officer to rendezvous with her, after which the man turned and walked away from her. He immediately went to the railing and threw his leg over. Acevedo immediately radioed for backup forthwith, and then, without hesitation, grabbed the man and, with her backup, prevented him from going over the railing. At the same time Acevedo was telling the man, "Don't do this! You don't want to do this." As Acevedo gained control of the man she said, "I'm going to help you" and was able to place him in handcuffs.



- P.O. Katherine Acevedo at the location of the attempted suicide

While Acevedo was recalling the incident she said she was amazed how quick backup officers arrived and helped her subdue the man. "It was the effort of everyone there", she said. Acevedo said she was happy the way the incident concluded and very thankful for the officers who came to her aid. Most of all she was grateful for a life saved.

On her fourth day of patrol Officer Acevedo learned what seasoned police officers know all too well, police work goes from zero to real in an instant. Welcome to the Job Katie.