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Press Release

May 25, 2017

[Metro-North](#)

IMMEDIATE

### MTA Police and Metro-North Train Crew Members Reunite Missing, Non-Verbal, Autistic Teen With His Family

#### *Officers and Crew Members Recognized by MTA Interim Executive Director and Acting MTA Chairman*

Four MTA employees were recognized for reuniting a missing, non-verbal, autistic teen with his family on Sunday, April 16. Acting MTA Board Chairman Fernando Ferrer and MTA Interim Executive Director Veronique "Ronnie" Hakim thanked MTAPD Officers Desire Bokor and Armando Hernandez, and Metro-North Conductor Sean Tedesco and Assistant Conductor Charles Dolan for their efforts at today's meeting of the MTA Board.

Conductor Sean Tedesco and Assistant Conductor Charles Dolan knew right away that the teen on board their westbound 11:46 a.m. train from New Haven should not have been traveling alone. When asked for his ticket, the young man didn't seem to understand. He avoided eye contact, wouldn't communicate and got up and moved to a different seat. Tedesco and Dolan recognized that the teen was in need of help. Tedesco contacted Metro-North's Rail Traffic Control to get a plan in motion to assist the young man. Rail Traffic Control arranged to have MTAPD officers meet the train at the Stamford station.

MTAPD Officers Desire Bokor and Armando Hernandez boarded the train at the Stamford station. "Our first priority was to establish a sense of trust with this young man," said Bokor. "We didn't want to alarm him in anyway and wanted him to know we were there to help." Speaking in soft tones, the officers introduced themselves to the teen and asked him his name and where he lived. "My impression was that he wanted to speak, but just couldn't get the words out," said Hernandez.

Officers Bokor and Hernandez worked with great patience and empathy to coax the teen off the train so they could continue their investigation. The officers motioned for the young man to follow them off the train and join them on a bench inside a platform shelter house.

"I went into my parent mode," said Hernandez, "I asked myself, if this young man were my child, how would I want him to be treated?" Tapping his pocket, Hernandez asked the teen, "Do you have ID?" The teen didn't respond. "Commuters started to gather around us, and it was becoming a more stressful environment, so we took him to the MTAPD office downstairs at the Stamford station," said Bokor.

Once downstairs in the station's precinct office, and after offering the teen a glass of water, the Officers noticed he was very protective of an object in his pocket, but he wouldn't reveal what it was. As Bokor distracted the teen, Hernandez grabbed the item out of the young man's pocket. It was a key chain. "We didn't want to cause the young man distress by holding on to his key chain, which seemed very precious to him. So I took out my key ring, gave it him, and asked 'how about we trade keys?'" The teen was happy with the arrangement, leaving Hernandez and Bokor free to carefully examine his key chain for clues to his identity.

The teen's key chain was equipped with a specialized GPS locator, but the battery was dead. Also affixed to the key, a tag with a name, an address in Astoria a Queens and a phone number. At about 3 p.m., Officer Bokor called the number, and reached the boy's mother, Swee Chan Cheong.

When Cheong answered the call, she was inside an NYPD police car, patrolling the neighborhood in search of her son, 18 year old Kahchi Ng. Cheong, who speaks Cantonese and little English, told the officers that her severely autistic son slipped out of the family's home in Astoria, Queens undetected at about 8 o'clock that morning.

Relieved and desperate to see her son, Officers Bokor and Hernandez offered to drive him back to his home in Queens and reunite him with his mother. "I can't express in words how grateful, I am to the MTA," said Cheong.

"We believe that Kahchi boarded the westbound train at Westport," said Bokor, "How he got to Westport from his home in Queens remains a mystery. We're just profoundly grateful he's safe and that he wasn't hurt in any way."

"On any given day, Metro-North conductors can interact with thousands of customers," said MTA Interim Executive Director, Veronique "Ronnie" Hakim. "The fact that Conductor Sean Tedesco and Assistant Conductor Charles Dolan took special notice of Kahchi and recognized the need to help him speaks volumes about our exceptional levels of professionalism and customer care at Metro-North. Officer Desire Bokor and Officer Armando Hernandez made it their mission to bring Kahchi safely home to his family. I extend my thanks and gratitude to Sean, Charles, Desire and Armando for reuniting this vulnerable young man with his family."