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News Release

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CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION CITES 24 FOR EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM IN U.S., CANADA

PITTSBURGH, PA, OCTOBER 11, 2001—In its fourth award announcement of 2001, the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission today named 24 individuals from throughout the United States and Canada as recipients of the CARNEGIE MEDAL. The bronze medal is given to persons who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others. Three of the awardees died in the performance of their heroic acts.

The heroes announced today bring to 88 the number of persons who have been recognized in 2001 and to 8,534 the total number of persons honored by the Commission since the Pittsburgh-based Fund's inception in 1904. Commission President Robert W. Off stated that each of the awardees or their survivors will receive also a grant of \$3,500. Throughout the 97 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, \$25.1 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance. The awardees are:

Gaston Thibodeau, Jr.	Lancaster, Ont.
Adam Ray Adorni	McKinleyville, Calif.
William G. Lort, Sr.	Ormond Beach, Fla.
Patrick Matthews	Mount Holly, N.J.
Thomas Konchesky	Star City, W. Va.
Camille Mikalik	Morgantown, W. Va.
Allen D. Fortney	Morgantown, W. Va.
Guy Adams	Watson, La.
Cullen Sellers, Sr.	Hammond, La.
Ronald M. Robertson	Knoxville, Tenn.
Darrald Waterman	Merced, Calif.
Marque Wiggins	Winton, Calif.
Peter G. Chirke	Kirkland, Que.
George L. Chenier, Jr., deceased	Moreno Valley, Calif.
Elliot Ralph Cole	Port Alice, B.C.
Jay Paul Oberholtzer, deceased	Bethel, Pa.
Jeffrey A. Gartner	South Lake Tahoe, Calif.
William R. Fisher	Colville, Wash.
Chad McFadden	Boulder, Mont.
Anh Nguyen	Gahanna, Ohio
Major Augustus Fisher, deceased	New Bern, N.C.
Ryan G. Belanger	Manchester, N.H.
James P. Webb	Beverly, Mass.
Lynda Marie Monteith	Peabody, Mass.

Resumes of the acts follow. To nominate someone for the CARNEGIE MEDAL, write the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, 425 Sixth Avenue, Suite 1640, Pittsburgh, PA 15219, or call 1-800-447-8900 (toll free). 01-4

GASTON THIBODEAU, JR.
Lancaster, Ontario

Gaston Thibodeau, Jr., helped to save Jean-Paul Brunette from burning, Vaudreuil, Quebec, May 3, 1999. Brunette, 62, was inside the cab of his tractor-trailer after it was involved in a highway accident with another truck. Flames erupted on the exterior of the tractor, on the passenger side. Brunette attempted to exit the cab, but the driver's door was jammed shut. Thibodeau, 31, an off-duty police officer, drove upon the scene and stopped. He went to Brunette's tractor, climbed to the driver's door, and saw Brunette struggling inside the cab. Unable to open the door, Thibodeau broke out the glass in its window, then reached inside and began to pull Brunette out. Brunette was caught by the leg inside the cab. Another man joined Thibodeau at the driver's side of the tractor and supported Brunette while Thibodeau leaned into the cab and pulled Brunette free, flames by then beginning to enter the cab. Thibodeau and the other man lowered Brunette to the pavement and were hurrying away from the tractor-trailer when an explosion occurred there. The tractor-trailer was eventually engulfed by flame and was destroyed. Brunette was treated at the hospital for cuts, and he recovered. 74470-8511

ADAM RAY ADORNI
McKinleyville, California

Adam Ray Adorni rescued Delia R. Sears from burning, McKinleyville, California, October 18, 2000. Ms. Sears, 81, and her son were in their double-width mobile home after fire broke out in the living room at night. A neighbor, Adorni, 25, commercial fisherman, was alerted to the fire and responded to the scene. He went to the back door of the mobile home and shouted inside. When he heard Ms. Sears respond, Adorni crawled through the door into the smoke-filled kitchen and found her lying on the floor about 10 feet away. He grasped Ms. Sears and dragged her to the door, then outside to safety. After walking Ms. Sears away from the mobile home, Adorni returned to it for her son, but flames by then had advanced to the back door and precluded entry. The son died in the fire. Ms. Sears was hospitalized for treatment of second- and third-degree burns to 30 percent of her body, and she died five weeks later, of effects of the fire. 74828-8512

WILLIAM G. LORT, SR.
Ormond Beach, Florida

William G. Lort, Sr., attempted to help save Nicole L. Parent from drowning, Ormond Beach, Florida, October 15, 2000. Ms. Parent, 18, was swimming in the Atlantic Ocean when she was caught by a very strong current that took her farther out and precluded her from returning to shore. Walking on the beach, Lort, 62, retired manufacturing equipment technician, and his daughter were alerted to Ms. Parent's predicament. They immediately ran into the water and swam to her. Lort and his daughter each grasped Ms. Parent by an arm and were struggling toward shore when a wave struck them. Lort maintained his hold of Ms. Parent, but his daughter was separated from them, and she swam to shore. Lort continued his attempt to swim with Ms. Parent but made little progress. In an advancing wave, he pushed Ms. Parent toward shore. Lort was then carried farther out by the current and over the course of the next several minutes attempted to swim out of the current and remain afloat. Rescue swimmers arrived and retrieved Ms. Parent and Lort, both of whom required hospital treatment. They recovered, Lort after being detained two days in the hospital's intensive care unit. 74871-8513

PATRICK MATTHEWS
Mount Holly, New Jersey

Patrick Matthews saved Brenda K. Ingram and Lauren P. Richmond from drowning, Oak Island, North Carolina, August 3, 2000. Ms. Ingram, 47, and her grandniece, Lauren, 6, were wading in the Atlantic Ocean when they drifted out from shore into water where Ms. Ingram could not touch bottom. Supporting Lauren, Ms. Ingram waved and called for help to people on shore, among them Patrick, 16, high school student. Patrick and two men waded and swam toward Ms. Ingram and Lauren, who were then about 225 feet out, but the men returned to shore, tired from fighting the waves. Patrick reached Ms. Ingram and Lauren, established a hold on them, then kicked toward shore, relying on the waves to move them to wadable water. They reached shore safely. Ms. Ingram and Lauren were made ill by the ordeal, but they recovered by the next day. 74683-8514

THOMAS KONCHESKY
Star City, West Virginia

CAMILLE MIKALIK
ALLEN D. FORTNEY
Morgantown, West Virginia

Thomas Konchesky, Camille Mikalik, and Allen D. Fortney rescued Robert J. and Rachel M. Halbritter from burning, Morgantown, West Virginia, November 7, 2000. Twins Robert and Rachel, 9, were in their family's home when a massive explosion of leaking natural gas reduced the one-story house to a pile of rubble. Debris trapped the children in the basement as flames were spreading nearby. Konchesky, 36, senior encapsulation operator, and Mikalik, 47, blender, had been driving in the neighborhood when they heard the explosion, then saw falling debris. They and others, including Fortney, 41, mechanic, who had heard the explosion from his place of employment nearby, immediately responded to the scene, where they learned that the children were trapped in the debris. Konchesky, Mikalik, and Fortney mounted the pile of rubble and pulled pieces of debris from it to locate Robert and Rachel. When they created a hole in the debris allowing access to the basement, Konchesky saw them. Mikalik held up a section of interior wall to help enlarge the hole as the children were removed through it. They, Konchesky, Mikalik, and Fortney then fled from the debris, which was covered by 30-foot flames within a minute. Robert and Rachel were hospitalized for treatment of burns and cuts, and they recovered.

75004-8530 / 75006-8531 / 75005-8532

GUY ADAMS
Watson, Louisiana

CULLEN SELLERS, SR.
Hammond, Louisiana

Guy Adams and Cullen Sellers, Sr., rescued Jeremy K. Posey from an out-of-control motorboat, Reserve, Louisiana, July 15, 2000. Jeremy, 1, remained aboard a 17-foot-long motorboat that traveled out of control in tight circles on Lake Maurepas after the adults on board had fallen into the water. A man in another motorboat attempted to stop the circling boat, but his craft overturned when the two boats collided. Darkness fell as the circling boat continued out of control for more than 30 minutes, during which time rescue personnel and state wildlife agents, including Adams, 33, and Sellers, 29, responded to the scene. Adams and Sellers approached the circling boat in their 21-foot craft. As Sellers took their craft into the path of the circling boat and nosed it between that boat's motor and stern, Adams jumped from the bow of their boat into the stern of the circling one and pulled the throttle, causing its motor to stall. Jeremy was not injured. 74685-8516 / 75424-8517

RONALD M. ROBERTSON
Knoxville, Tennessee

Ronald M. Robertson saved Timothy S. Wistafke and Melissa Talley and attempted to save Joshua D. Wistafke, Jr., and Breanna N. Talley from suffocation, Huntsville, Alabama, June 14, 2000. Melissa Talley, 24, and her children Timothy, 2; Joshua, 2, and Breanna, 3, were in bedrooms of the family's mobile home after fire broke out in the living room. Others fled the burning structure and alerted Robertson, 29, tattoo artist, who lived nearby. Robertson immediately responded to the scene, where he placed an inverted garbage can below a bedroom window. Standing on the can, he leaned through the window and grasped Timothy, who lay unconscious on a bed just inside the window. After removing Timothy from the mobile home, Robertson climbed through the window into the smoke-filled room, which adjoined the burning living room. He took Joshua, also unconscious, from another bed in that room and handed him through the window to safety. Having seen Ms. Talley unconscious on the floor of that room, Robertson dragged her to the window and handed her out. As firefighters and other emergency personnel were arriving, Robertson turned back into the room and proceeded to the adjacent bedroom, where he found Breanna, unconscious, on the doorway floor. He picked her up, went to a window in the adjacent bedroom, and handed her outside to safety, then climbed through the window himself. Timothy and Ms. Talley required hospital treatment for smoke inhalation, but Joshua and Breanna died of effects of the fire. Robertson inhaled smoke and sustained a laceration behind his ear, and he recovered.

74563-8518

DARRALD WATERMAN
Merced, California

MARQUE WIGGINS
Winton, California

Darrald Waterman and Marque Wiggins saved Frank F. Wharton from being struck by a train, Merced, California, May 14, 2000. Wharton, 61, who required the use of a power scooter, was crossing a railroad track at a roadway crossing when the scooter became lodged between the rails of the track as a train approached. Motorists stopped at the crossing included Waterman, 40, respiratory therapist, who, alerted to Wharton's situation, immediately exited his vehicle and ran to him. Waterman attempted to dislodge the scooter before being joined shortly by another motorist, Wiggins, 31, dairy herdsman. As the train bore down on them at undiminished speed, Waterman and Wiggins pulled on the scooter to dislodge it, and they moved Wharton from the track just before the train passed, without slowing.

74587-8519 / 74588-8520

PETER G. CHIRKE
Kirkland, Quebec

Peter G. Chirke saved two women from drowning, Jenner, California, July 12, 1999. Two women, ages 46 and 42, were standing at the waterline of a Pacific Ocean beach when they lost their footing and were washed into deeper water, made turbulent by large breakers and a very strong backwash. They were tossed about in the surf, unable to regain their footing. Standing on shore, Chirke, 54, salesman, saw the women in the water and ran to a point on the beach opposite them. He entered the ocean and, wading against the breakers and backwash, made his way to the older woman. He grasped her and pulled her to a point near shore, where another man secured her. Chirke then turned and re-entered the rough water for the younger woman, who had been carried farther out and was submerged. Chirke found her after a few moments' searching, then grasped her and pulled her to shore, where others assisted her. The women were stunned but required no medical treatment.

74941-8521

GEORGE L. CHENIER, JR., deceased
Moreno Valley, California

George L. Chenier, Jr., died after rescuing Paul C. Navarette from burning, Moreno Valley, California, August 10, 2000. Paul, 15, was the passenger in a pickup truck driven by his father that, in a highway accident, overturned onto its driver's side and caught fire. Driving nearby, Chenier, 29, assistant store manager, parked at the scene and ran to the burning truck. With flames spreading quickly on the truck to engulf it, Chenier grabbed Paul by the arms and pulled him out, through the window of the passenger door. They fell to the pavement aflame, then walked from the truck to where others extinguished the flames on them. Paul and Chenier required hospitalization for treatment of serious burns, Chenier's to 90 percent of his body. He died of his burns the next day. Paul's father died at the scene. 74684-8522

ELLIOT RALPH COLE
Port Alice, British Columbia

Elliot Ralph Cole rescued Jon M. Nostdal from an attacking cougar, Port Alice, British Columbia, February 8, 2001. Nostdal, 52, was riding his bicycle on an unlit road at night when a cougar approached from behind, jumped on his back, and took him to the roadway, where it began to maul him. Nostdal fought against the cougar for several minutes, during which it bit him about the arms and head. Cole, 39, instrument mechanic, arrived in his truck and saw the attack. He stopped at the scene, approached the cougar, and struck it repeatedly, first with a gym bag containing books and then with his fists, but the cougar would not release Nostdal. Cole then picked up Nostdal's bicycle, placed the front wheel on the cougar's neck, and applied pressure. The cougar released Nostdal but retained a hold of his jacket. Nostdal slipped out of the jacket, then ran to Cole's truck and entered, followed shortly by Cole. Cole took Nostdal to the hospital, where he was detained three days for treatment of numerous puncture wounds and lacerations that required sutures. He recovered. Cole also received hospital treatment, for lacerations to a hand, and he too recovered. 75151-8523

JAY PAUL OBERHOLTZER, deceased
Bethel, Pennsylvania

Jay Paul Oberholtzer died helping attempt to save Timothy L. Oberholtzer from drowning, Bethel, Pennsylvania, December 21, 2000. Timothy, 10, was walking on the ice-covered pond on his family's property when he broke through the ice and fell into the frigid, nine-foot-deep water at a point about 60 feet from the bank. His father, who was on the bank, went out onto the ice for him, but en route he too broke through. Timothy's brother, Jay Paul, 19, greenhouse employee, responded from nearby. Taking a long, cardboard tube with him, he walked onto the ice and gave the tube to his father, who used it for support. Jay Paul continued toward Timothy, but when he was about five feet from him, he too broke through the ice. He submerged and did not resurface, and Timothy also submerged. The father made his way onto solid ice shortly before rescue workers arrived. Using a boat, rescuers found Jay Paul and removed him from the pond. A police diver located Timothy. Both boys were taken to the hospital, where resuscitation was attempted. They had drowned. 74957-8524

JEFFREY A. GARTNER
South Lake Tahoe, California

Jeffrey A. Gartner rescued Steven A. Maclean from a runaway truck, Menlo Park, California, August 29, 2000. When Maclean, 51, lost consciousness while driving a tractor-trailer at about 25 m.p.h. on an interstate highway, the rig left the highway, hit a concrete wall alongside it, and continued to travel on the shoulder. It was morning rush hour, and the truck was headed toward the ramps of a highway interchange less than a half-mile away. Driving behind the rig, Gartner, 28, highway patrol officer on duty, saw the accident. He drove alongside the tractor-trailer and saw Maclean slumped over in the seat. Gartner pulled ahead of the rig, parked on the shoulder in front of it, and ran toward the tractor-trailer as it approached. The rig's speed having slowed to about 15 m.p.h., Gartner jumped onto the running board of the tractor, entered the cab through the driver's door, and stepped on the brake pedal, taking the tractor-trailer to a stop just short of the patrol car. Gartner and another man removed Maclean from the cab and worked to revive him until other help arrived. Maclean was taken to the hospital, where he died two days later of the heart attack he had suffered. 74761-8525

WILLIAM R. FISHER
Colville, Washington

CHAD MCFADDEN
Boulder, Montana

William R. Fisher and Chad McFadden saved Christiane S. Sikora and Steven Lloyd from burning, Boulder, Montana, August 7, 2000. Ms. Sikora, 37, and a friend, Lloyd, 41, were creating firebreaks at Ms. Sikora's residence, which, in a sparsely populated, mountainous area, was in the path of an advancing wildfire. Unbeknownst to them, a major run of the days-old fire had just started, and flames were quickly approaching the property. On learning that the residence was directly in the path of the fire, Fisher, 54, a fire investigator then serving as the operations section chief of an out-of-state firefighting team dispatched to combat the fire, responded to the scene with McFadden, 28, a deputy sheriff who was familiar with the area. Although advised by safety officers not to proceed, the men drove past advancing flames to Ms. Sikora's house, which was reached by a long, steep, and winding driveway, and told her and Lloyd to leave the premises immediately. Fisher and McFadden then returned down the driveway to where they waited at the road for Ms. Sikora and Lloyd. After several minutes, Fisher and McFadden returned toward the house, en route meeting Ms. Sikora and Lloyd in separate vehicles. With no room to turn on the narrow driveway, Fisher, who was driving, backed to the road. The wildfire was burning on both sides of the road as the three vehicles were driven to safety. It continued its advance, overtaking Ms. Sikora's property, and was contained four days later. 74790-8526 / 74789-8527

ANH NGUYEN
Gahanna, Ohio

Anh Nguyen rescued Timothy M. Stein from burning, Mount Gilead, Ohio, June 28, 2000. Stein, 32, was semiconscious in the driver's seat of a van after a highway accident in which the vehicle came to rest atop a car in a wooded area off the highway, then caught fire. Alerted to the accident, Nguyen, 30, state trooper, responded to the scene, where he climbed onto the car to gain access to the van's passenger door. After using a fire extinguisher against flames that had entered the van through its dashboard and console, Nguyen unlocked and opened the passenger door, then entered the van. He released Stein's safety belt, then grasped Stein and backed out of the van with him. They fell to the ground, where others assisted in dragging Stein away from the van, the interior of which was soon engulfed by flames. Stein was hospitalized for treatment of burns to his legs and an arm and other injuries. 74826-8528

MAJOR AUGUSTUS FISHER, deceased
New Bern, North Carolina

Major Augustus Fisher died attempting to save Cynthia M. and Christian A. Davis from burning, New Bern, North Carolina, September 9, 2000. At night, Ms. Davis, 42, and her son Christian, 1, were in a second-floor bedroom of a two-story house after fire broke out in a bedroom on the first floor. The house was owned by Ms. Davis's father, Fisher, 80, retired auto mechanic, who was in another bedroom on the first floor. Awakened to the fire by family members, Ms. Davis responded to the first floor then returned to the second for Christian as the others fled the house. Worsening heat and smoke prevented her from returning to the first floor with Christian. Asking of Ms. Davis's whereabouts, Fisher re-entered the house through the back door. Ms. Davis, meanwhile, was escaping with Christian through a second-floor window on the side of the structure. Family members then searched for Fisher but deteriorating conditions thwarted their entering the house. Firefighters who arrived shortly found Fisher inside the house, on the first floor near the stairs. He had died of smoke inhalation. Ms. Davis and Christian required hospital treatment for smoke inhalation, and Ms. Davis sustained a sprained ankle, lacerations, and contusions. They recovered.

74747-8529

RYAN G. BELANGER
Manchester, New Hampshire

Ryan G. Belanger saved Paula M. Halla from burning, Bedford, New Hampshire, April 8, 2000. Ms. Halla, 53, was trapped by wreckage in the driver's seat of her car after an accident in which the car left the highway, struck a tree head on, and caught fire. Witnessing the accident, Belanger, 24, business operator, who was traveling on the same highway, ran to the car and attempted to open the doors on its driver's side, but they were jammed. He then tried, again without success, to extinguish flames on the passenger side of the car. Returning to the driver's side, Belanger pried open the rear door and entered the car. He pulled on the back of Ms. Halla's seat, then, with difficulty, dislodged it by stomping on it. He grasped Ms. Halla underneath the arms and, backing out of the car through the rear door, pulled her out of her seat and then from the car. They fell to the ground beside the car, flames then beginning to enter its interior. Others helped them away from the car, which was shortly engulfed by flames. Ms. Halla required hospital treatment for her injuries.

74472-8515

JAMES P. WEBB
Beverly, Massachusetts

LYNDA MARIE MONTEITH
Peabody, Massachusetts

James P. Webb and Lynda Marie Monteith attempted to rescue Nelson V. Ramos from life-threatening injury, Beverly, Massachusetts, October 3, 2000. At night, Ramos, 33, was thrown from the passenger seat of a car during a highway accident in which the car struck and broke off a utility pole. Badly injured and unconscious, he lay on the pavement beside the car, under high-voltage lines that, still affixed to the downed top of the pole, were about four feet off the street in that vicinity. Awakened in his nearby home by the accident, Webb, 42, teacher, immediately responded to the scene. Crouching, he approached Ramos under the lines to tend to him. A motorist, Ms. Monteith, 33, registered nurse, approached the scene and was flagged down by persons who had gathered there. She left her vehicle and, also going under the lines, joined Webb to tend Ramos. Preparing to reposition Ramos, Webb and Ms. Monteith each sustained a major electrical shock from one of the lines that sent both to the pavement, unconscious. Ramos, Webb, and Ms. Monteith were taken to the hospital, where Ramos was pronounced dead of his crash-related injuries. Webb and Ms. Monteith required treatment for electrical injury. Webb was hospitalized for 13 days, then required months of therapy, and Ms. Monteith was detained a week.

74803-8533 / 74804-8534

CARNEGIE MEDAL



ANDREW CARNEGIE

