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News Release

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EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM BY 20 IN U.S., CANADA CITED BY CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION

PITTSBURGH, PA, DECEMBER 20, 2000—In its fifth and final award announcement of 2000, the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission today named 20 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. Two of the awardees died in the performance of their heroic acts.

The heroes announced today bring to 105 the number of persons honored by the Commission in 2000 and to 8,446 the total number of awards made 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 96 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, \$24.5 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance.

The awardees are:

Ray W. Champine	Puryear, Tenn.
Brenda L. Peck, deceased	Watertown, N.Y.
Louis G. Lalande	Newcastle, Ont.
Eduardo Izquierdo	Mohegan Lake, N.Y.
Lyle D. Baade	Peoria, Ariz.
Jason B. Milligan	Milwaukee, Wisc.
José L. Cruz	West Bend, Wisc.
Tim Castor	Bryan, Ohio
Warren H. A. McCollum	Yanceyville, N.C.
Leonard J. Duffney	Lonsdale, Minn.
James A. Hampton	Brockton, Mass.
Donald Leftridge, deceased	Harrisburg, Pa.
John P. Ikenberry	State College, Pa.
James Comet	Meadowbrook, Pa.
Terry Mitchum	Lavonia, Ga.
Kenneth Rutland	North Vancouver, B.C.
Rachel A. Pittman	Rosman, N.C.
Ricardo S. Giron	Las Vegas, N.M.
Nicholas Popadyn, Jr.	Bellbrook, Ohio
Sean Kevin Murphy	Loveland, Ohio

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 (toll free) 1-800-447-8900.

RAY W. CHAMPINE
Puryear, Tennessee

Ray W. Champine helped to rescue Golsby Gatewood from burning, Martin, Tennessee, December 7, 1999. Gatewood, 90, was in his one-story, wood-frame house after a fire broke out there and filled the house with smoke. On his rounds in the neighborhood, Champine, 62, letter carrier, heard a smoke detector alarm, then saw smoke issuing from the eaves of Gatewood's house. After telling a neighbor to report the fire, Champine entered the burning house through its front door and proceeded through a hall in search of Gatewood. Encumbered by heat and smoke, Champine was retreating when he heard Gatewood call out. Champine turned and went further through the hall. He entered the kitchen, then found Gatewood, who was conscious, on the floor of the adjoining bedroom. Champine grasped Gatewood and dragged him into the hall. Fire conditions were deteriorating rapidly, and Champine was no longer able to identify the path to the front door. He felt along the wall of the hallway and came across a window, which he broke with his hand. A firefighter who had arrived heard the breaking glass and responded to that side of the house. He kicked in the back door, which was adjacent to the window, and dragged Gatewood outside to safety, Champine following. Gatewood and Champine were taken to the hospital, where they were admitted, Champine to the intensive care unit, for treatment of smoke inhalation and minor burns. They recovered.

74102-8427

BRENDA L. PECK, deceased
Watertown, New York

Brenda L. Peck died after saving Stephen J. Gilligan and others and attempting to save Kenneth E. Fields from burning, Watertown, New York, January 22, 2000. In the early morning, Gilligan, 19, and three others were asleep in a first-floor apartment of a two-story house after fire broke out in the kitchen of the adjoining apartment and spread. Fields, 58, was in an apartment on the second floor. Ms. Peck, 27, cook, who occupied the apartment in which the accidental fire originated, fled the unit and pounded on the door of the adjoining one, awakening Gilligan and alerting him to the fire. Gilligan and the others fled that apartment to safety as Ms. Peck went to the second floor and alerted Fields. Gaining access to his apartment, Ms. Peck was heard, in reporting the fire, urging Fields to flee. Flames shortly engulfed the house and spread to an adjacent one. Firefighters found the bodies of Ms. Peck and Fields in Fields's apartment. Both had died of smoke inhalation.

74208-8428

LOUIS G. LALANDE
Newcastle, Ontario

Louis G. Lalande saved an indeterminate number of persons from assault, Oshawa, Ontario, December 7, 1999. A man armed with a starter's pistol entered a bank in a shopping mall and, in a robbery attempt, threatened the tellers with the pistol, which he fired. At least one of the customers dropped to the floor. Lalande, 64, retired steamfitter, was in the mall corridor just outside the bank's entrance when he heard the shot and was alerted to the robbery attempt. He looked into the bank and saw the customer on the floor and the assailant brandishing the pistol, which he fired again, repeatedly. Lalande picked up a metal folding chair from the corridor and, entering the bank, quickly approached the assailant. He struck the assailant about the head and shoulders with the chair at least twice, stunning him. Three other men then rushed the assailant and took him to the floor, where they held him for police, who arrived shortly and arrested him.

74090-8429

EDUARDO IZQUIERDO
Mohegan Lake, New York

Eduardo Izquierdo rescued Andrew Mekeel from burning, Mohegan Lake, New York, November 18, 1999. Mekeel, 22, remained in the front-seat area of the car in which he was the passenger after an accident at night in which the car struck a utility pole and caught fire. Power lines from the pole, including a high-voltage one, were downed in the vicinity of the car. Asleep in his nearby home, Izquierdo, 55, construction worker, was awakened by the accident, and he saw the burning car from his bedroom window. He immediately ran to the scene, where he attempted to open the car's front passenger door, but it was jammed shut. Gaining access to the car through that door's window, Izquierdo extended his arms and head inside, despite intensifying flames and smoke and arcing of overhead electrical lines. He pulled Mekeel's head from the dashboard and through the window, then reached to Mekeel's back, grasped him by the belt, and pulled him the rest of the way out. Izquierdo lowered Mekeel to the ground and dragged him away from the car moments before the fire increased suddenly and engulfed the car, the driver of which was killed. Mekeel was hospitalized for treatment of burns and other injury, and Izquierdo was treated at the scene for a cut and minor burn. They recovered. 74072-8430

LYLE D. BAADE
Peoria, Arizona

Lyle D. Baade helped to rescue 40 people from assault, Peoria, Arizona, April 19, 2000. A 66-year-old man armed with three loaded pistols and a loaded assault rifle entered the recreation center of a retirement community during a homeowners' association meeting. From one end of the foyer, he opened fire into the center's meeting room with one of the pistols, striking four of the 43 people gathered there. Baade, 66, retired construction worker, and his wife had attempted to leave the meeting moments earlier when they encountered the man in the foyer, and the man had shoved Baade back toward the meeting room. After firing, the assailant put down the pistol and picked up the assault rifle. Although he was a heart-transplant recipient, Baade ran from his position across the foyer and tackled the gunman, who greatly outweighed him. The assailant released the rifle, but as it was within his grasp, he and Baade struggled for control of it. The assailant fired one shot from the rifle, striking a man in the foot. Other men from the meeting ran to the assailant and helped Baade subdue him. Police arrived shortly and arrested him. Two of the women at the meeting were fatally wounded, and three men sustained gunshot injury. Baade required hospital treatment for scratches, contusions, and a rapid heartbeat. He recovered. 74499-8431

JASON B. MILLIGAN
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Jason B. Milligan helped to save a girl from drowning, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 10, 1999. A 13-year-old girl was being washed downstream by the extremely swift current of the Kinnickinnic River, which was swollen from heavy rain. From the bank of the river, Milligan, 18, metal cutter, saw the girl being swept away. He immediately removed items of attire and entered the water, but he lost his footing and also was pulled downstream. Milligan swam to the girl, who then grasped him around the neck and held to him as they were swept away. As they approached a bridge crossing the river, firefighters threw a life preserver with nylon line attached, and Milligan caught it. He held to it with one hand while holding the girl with the other, and police and firefighters pulled them to the bank and out of the water. Both Milligan and the girl were taken to the hospital, where Milligan was treated for abrasions. He recovered.

73731-8446

JOSÉ L. CRUZ
West Bend, Wisconsin

José L. Cruz helped to save Ronald R. Jurena from drowning, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 11, 1999. Jurena, 56, lost consciousness as he was being washed downstream by the extremely swift current of the Kinnickinnic River, which was swollen from two days of rainstorms. On a bridge crossing the river in the vicinity, José, 17, high school student, saw Jurena being swept away, and he immediately ran along the bank after him. After aborted attempts were made to extend a line to Jurena, José entered the river, which flowed in a concrete channel at the scene, swam to him, and grasped him by the jacket. Unable to regain footing in the current, José was carried with Jurena about 1,000 feet to a point along the bank to which a police officer and another man had responded. Those men helped José and Jurena from the river. Jurena was hospitalized for treatment of having nearly drowned, and José was tired, but he recovered.

73891-8432

TIM CASTOR
Bryan, Ohio

Tim Castor saved Roger L. Hamrick from burning, Bryan, Ohio, September 29, 1999. In a highway accident, the van that Hamrick, 44, was driving left the roadway and struck a regulator on a natural gas line. The van came to rest atop the regulator, and gas escaping under pressure from the line ignited and set fire to the front of the van. Castor, 39, sales and service representative, was one of the passing motorists who stopped at the scene. He entered the smoke-filled van through its front passenger door and, despite flames having entered the van about its pedals, grasped Hamrick, who remained in the driver's seat, and pulled. Hamrick was caught in the wreckage by his right foot. Castor freed the foot, then maneuvered backward, pulling Hamrick from the van. Castor and two other men at the scene carried Hamrick away from the van moments before the front of the vehicle was engulfed by flames. Hamrick was taken to the hospital for treatment, and Castor sustained minor burns on his hands and showed signs of smoke inhalation. Both recovered.

74099-8433

WARREN H. A. MCCOLLUM
Yanceyville, North Carolina

Warren H. A. McCollum saved Loretha J. Freeman from drowning, Burlington, North Carolina, January 24, 2000. Ms. Freeman, 23, was the driver of a car that slid from an icy highway, entered a partially frozen pond, and began to submerge about 25 feet from the bank where the water was about six feet deep. She removed her safety belt and exited the car through its driver's door. Unable to swim, she held to the door and shouted for help. McCollum, 18, forklift operator, had been traveling on the highway when he saw the accident. He immediately went to the pond, where he removed his coat and, although he suffered asthma, entered the water. McCollum waded, then swam out to Ms. Freeman, having to break some ice en route. He grasped her with one arm and with the other swam her back to the bank. They left the water and walked to a nearby house, where an ambulance was called. Ms. Freeman was cold after the rescue and she sustained a bruised leg, but she recovered. McCollum likewise was cold, and he was winded. He recovered.

74236-8434

LEONARD J. DUFFNEY
Lonsdale, Minnesota

Leonard J. Duffney saved John M. Wilhelm and Timothy J. Besser from drowning, Lonsdale, Minnesota, November 27, 1999. Wilhelm, 40, and Besser, 31, were duck hunting from a boat on Phelps Lake when the boat capsized, throwing them into the 38-degree water near the center of the lake. They shouted for help. Duffney, 72, farmer, who lived along the lake, was alerted to the situation. He immediately retrieved his 12-foot aluminum rowboat from storage and, against the wind and in choppy water conditions, rowed about 2,000 feet out to the men. He positioned the stern of his boat toward Besser and assisted him aboard. He then positioned the boat next to Wilhelm and, with Besser's help, lifted Wilhelm aboard. A part of the boat's motor-mount board, at the stern, broke during the transfer, and the boat took on some water. Unable to row against the wind, with the added weight, to where emergency personnel were arriving on the bank, Duffney turned and rowed to the opposite bank. From there, Wilhelm and Besser were taken to the hospital, where they were treated for hypothermia. They recovered. Duffney was cold after the rescue and later suffered from sore muscles, but he too recovered. 74098-8435

JAMES A. HAMPTON
Brockton, Massachusetts

James A. Hampton saved an indeterminate number of persons from an impending explosion, Norton, Massachusetts, February 23, 1999. Hampton, 32, truck driver, was the driver of an aluminum box truck carrying a cargo of liquid oxygen that was contained under pressure in tanks, including a 400-gallon tank that was half full. As he began to cross an overpass that spanned a heavily traveled interstate highway, Hampton saw flames issuing from the vents in the truck's cargo box. Rather than stop in the breakdown lane, Hampton continued driving the burning truck, in search of an open space, despite believing that an explosion of the oxygen tanks was imminent. After proceeding about 1,200 feet, he turned into a field at a farm, then jumped out of the truck and fled. A massive explosion of the truck followed within seconds, demolishing the vehicle, throwing molten aluminum in all directions, and scattering debris over a wide area. Although the nearby farmhouse, which was occupied, and outbuildings of the farm sustained fire damage, no one was injured. 74043-8436

DONALD LEFRIDGE, deceased
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Donald Leftridge died attempting to save Eric A. Strickland from drowning, Dauphin, Pennsylvania, July 24, 1999. Strickland, 28, and Leftridge, 56, pallet builder, were fishing in the Susquehanna River at a point about 150 feet from the closer bank. They were standing in waist-deep water on a submerged rock ledge, fishing a deeper pool downstream, when Strickland, who was a nonswimmer, entered the pool in some fashion and began to struggle. Leftridge extended his fishing rod toward Strickland and shouted for him to grasp it. Leftridge then entered the pool. Both men submerged and drowned. 73836-8437

JOHN P. IKENBERRY
State College, Pennsylvania

John P. Ikenberry rescued Thomas W. Kelly from burning, State College, Pennsylvania, January 12, 2000. Kelly, 66, was in his one-story house after fire broke out in the kitchen. Walking in the neighborhood, Ikenberry, 31, company president, who lived nearby, smelled smoke and, with a neighbor, traced it to Kelly's house, discovering the fire. After he called to Kelly through the front door and learned that he was in the burning house, Ikenberry entered the smoke-filled living room through the door as the neighbor left to alert help. Ikenberry penetrated the living room somewhat but had to retreat to the door for air. He then lay prone and crawled about 12 feet across the living room to Kelly, who, semiconscious, was sitting on the floor. Ikenberry grasped Kelly and crawled back to the door, dragging him, then exited the house with him. Kelly, who sustained smoke inhalation and burn injury, was taken to the hospital, then was transferred to a burn center, where he died 34 days later. Ikenberry recovered from minor smoke inhalation.

74213-8438

JAMES COMET
Meadowbrook, Pennsylvania

James Comet saved Michelle J. English from burning, Hatboro, Pennsylvania, December 29, 1999. Badly injured, Ms. English, 23, remained in the driver's seat of her car after a highway accident at night in which the car caught fire. Another motorist, Comet, 49, branch chief, witnessed the accident. He exited his vehicle and ran to Ms. English's car, where flames were issuing a few feet from the engine. Although Comet had undergone coronary surgery one week earlier and, in a weakened condition, was under restrictions to his physical activity, he opened the driver's door, which was jammed, and leaned into the car. He grasped Ms. English, who was unconscious, pulled her upright, then leaned her through the driver's door and lowered her to the ground. Comet dragged her about 25 feet from the car before he was aided by others in taking her farther away. Flames spread on the car, shortly engulfing it. Ms. English was hospitalized for treatment of her injuries. Comet was nearly exhausted by his exertions but recovered after two days' rest.

74261-8439

TERRY MITCHUM
Lavonia, Georgia

Terry Mitchum helped to rescue Randy Shirley from assault, Lavonia, Georgia, February 3, 2000. In an arrest attempt following a high-speed chase, Shirley, 45, a police chief, struggled to keep his revolver from being seized by a man who had just robbed a bank. Having accompanied Shirley on the chase to provide directions, Mitchum, 34, store manager, left Shirley's police car upon hearing the gun fire. As he did so, he saw that Shirley was being nearly overpowered by the robber, and he heard Shirley call out for help. Mitchum ran to the men and tackled the robber, falling with him into a briar patch, the robber landing atop Mitchum. They struggled briefly, or until Shirley and two other officers then arriving subdued and apprehended the robber. Shirley and Mitchum received cuts and scratches about the head and neck, but they recovered.

74590-8440

KENNETH RUTLAND
North Vancouver, British Columbia

Kenneth Rutland helped to rescue Karim S. Bhatia and Masoud Shekarchi from exposure and avalanche, North Vancouver, British Columbia, January 27, 1999. Bhatia, 32, and Shekarchi, 41, were hiking a trail on Grouse Mountain when they were overtaken by an avalanche that swept them through a gully several hundred feet down the side of the mountain. They were left badly injured and partly buried by snow in the gully. Rutland, 35, provincial peace officer, had been climbing the trail when he learned from other hikers that another man had been struck by an avalanche and was missing. Volunteering to search for the man, whose body was found months later, Rutland turned and began to descend the mountain. Leaving the trail, he approached the gully, where he heard moaning, then saw Shekarchi and the exposed leg of Bhatia. To lessen his exposure to additional avalanche, Rutland went to a point at which the gully narrowed, then quickly crossed it there and descended to the men. He dug out Bhatia and Shekarchi and concluded that their injuries and the unstable snow precluded immediate evacuation. Assuming that rescue help had been alerted by the hikers he had encountered earlier, Rutland prepared a refuge for Bhatia and Shekarchi in the snow at the edge of the gully, and he gave up items of attire for them. Before he could get them to the edge of the gully, a slide of snow took the three men farther down the mountainside. Over the course of the following few hours, Rutland fought freezing temperatures, blowing snow, and a series of avalanches of varying size as he struggled to secure Bhatia and Shekarchi. Responding rescue personnel tended the two victims, aided by Rutland, who by then was numbed by the cold. Evacuated from the mountain, Bhatia and Shekarchi were hospitalized for extensive injuries, including broken bones. After climbing to the end of trail, Rutland left the mountain by tram.

74454-8441

RACHEL A. PITTMAN
Rosman, North Carolina

Rachel A. Pittman attempted to rescue three children from a runaway vehicle, Rosman, North Carolina, October 29, 1999. The children, aged 4, 1, and two weeks, were unattended inside an automobile, which, its engine running, was parked in front of a store in a paved lot that sloped down to the roadway. The car began to move backward toward the road. In a vehicle parked next to the car was Ms. Pittman, 32, waitress. She immediately exited her vehicle and ran after the runaway car. Catching up to it as it began to enter the roadway, Ms. Pittman opened the driver's door, reached inside, and grasped the steering wheel. The opened door struck her and knocked her to the pavement, and the front left wheel of the car ran over her. The car came to a stop partially over her but was moved away by others. Ms. Pittman was hospitalized two days for treatment of extensive injuries, including a broken rib and broken collarbone, and she required several weeks of convalescence.

74034-8442

RICARDO S. GIRON
Las Vegas, New Mexico

Ricardo S. Giron saved Sandy A. and Leonardo H. Garcia from drowning, Las Vegas, New Mexico, September 5, 1999. Sandy, 6; Leonardo, 8, and their older brother were struggling to stay afloat in water beyond their depth in a cove of Storrie Lake. Giron, 42, financial advisor, was on his boat in the cove when he became aware of the children's situation. He took the boat toward the children, then dived from it and swam to Sandy. After a brief struggle, during which he was submerged, Giron established a hold on Sandy and towed her to wadable water near the bank, from which others then removed her from the lake. Despite his tiring and injuring himself in a fall at the bank, Giron re-entered the water when he saw that Leonardo was still in the cove. He swam to Leonardo and towed him back to wadable water, from which others took Leonardo from the lake. Nearly exhausted, Giron too required help in leaving the water. Sandy was treated at the scene by paramedics, and Leonardo was taken to the hospital, where he was treated and released later that day. The children's brother drowned.

74194-8443

NICHOLAS POPADYN, JR.
Bellbrook, Ohio

Nicholas Popadyn, Jr., rescued DeAngelo S. X. Watkins from burning, Bellbrook, Ohio, December 2, 1999. DeAngelo, 6, was unconscious in the front passenger seat of a car after an accident in which the car left the highway and struck a utility pole, then overturned onto its roof and caught fire on its underside. Electric lines from the pole, which was broken into pieces, hung low at the scene. A motorist who arrived at the scene, Popadyn, 52, real estate executive, pulled off the highway and responded to the burning car. Hearing moaning from inside the car, Popadyn approached its passenger side, where he saw DeAngelo through the broken-out window of the front door. Kneeling, Popadyn reached through the window and felt DeAngelo's safety belt. He shouted for a knife, which a man provided. Popadyn then cut the safety belt, and DeAngelo dropped to the ceiling of the car. Popadyn grasped DeAngelo by his coat and pulled him through the window, then picked him up and carried him to safety. Popadyn returned to the car for the driver but could not see him in the wreckage. Flames increased to engulf the car and were not extinguished by firefighters until power to the lines was turned off. The driver died at the scene. DeAngelo required hospitalization for a broken leg and other injuries, and he sustained minor burns to his face and chest. He recovered. 74143-8444

SEAN KEVIN MURPHY
Loveland, Ohio

Sean Kevin Murphy rescued Donna M. Cahill from assault, Mauldin, South Carolina, February 8, 2000. Ms. Cahill, 46, was standing at the checkout counter of a drugstore when, without provocation, the man behind her stabbed her. Ms. Cahill struggled against the assailant as she tried to escape his grasp, and the assailant inflicted additional knife wounds. Murphy, 32, shift supervisor, who was working at the counter, grasped a wooden cane, ran from behind the counter and approached the assailant, and struck him with the cane, breaking it apart. Freed, Ms. Cahill ran to the back of the store. The assailant then turned on Murphy, swiping at him with the knife and drawing blood. When Murphy fell to the floor while attempting to flee, the assailant straddled him and inflicted additional knife wounds, then held the knife to his neck. Others in the store shouted that the police were on the way. The assailant got off Murphy and left the store but was apprehended shortly by police. Ms. Cahill was treated at the hospital for knife wounds, as was Murphy, who was lacerated about the head and one arm. Both Ms. Cahill and Murphy recovered from their injuries. 74339-8445

CARNEGIE MEDAL



ANDREW CARNEGIE

