



NEWS RELEASE

Carnegie Hero Fund COMMISSION

A CENTURY of HEROES 1904-2004

FOR RELEASE:
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CARNEGIE MEDALS AWARDED TO 15 FOR EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM

PITTSBURGH, PA, MARCH 17, 2005—In its first award announcement of 2005, the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission today named 15 individuals from throughout the United States and Canada as recipients of the CARNEGIE MEDAL. The medal is given to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others.

The heroes announced today bring to 8,884 the number of persons who have been recognized by the Commission since the Pittsburgh-based Fund's inception in 1904. Commission President Mark Laskow stated that each of the awardees or their survivors also will receive a grant of \$3,500. Throughout the 101 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, \$27.7 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance.

The awardees include Frank L. Jackson of Bethesda, Md., a Duke University student who saved a man from drowning in the swollen and raging Potomac River in the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel in September 2003. Jackson, then 19, effected the rescue by kayak over a mile-long course through rapids in Mather Gorge, near Potomac, Md. Though the craft capsized at the end of the men's wild ride, both survived, with only minor injury.

The awardees are:

Matthew Nickels	Dayton, Ohio
Damion DeRobbio	Struthers, Ohio
Karl Vaartjes	Mississauga, Ont.
Kevin James Crowley	Cardington, Ohio
Frank L. Jackson	Bethesda, Md.
Frank L. Hubbard	Goldston, N. C.
Mark Richard Bradley	Braintree, Mass.
Christopher Cranford	Humble, Texas
Ralph Sumner, Jr.	Kinston, N. C.
Steve J. Sciortino	Colusa, Calif.
James W. Rodin	Pismo Beach, Calif.
Alejandro J. Muñoz	Fontana, Calif.
Kevin R. Minehart	Columbus, Ohio
Robert L. Pryor	Ridgeley, W. Va.
Howard R. Talbott	Bedford, Pa.

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). Fuller information on the CARNEGIE MEDAL and the history of the CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION can be found at www.carnegiehero.org

MATTHEW NICKELS
Dayton, Ohio

Matthew Nickels saved Kendall Hock from drowning, Dayton, Ohio, January 24, 2004. Kendall, 7, broke through ice partially covering a water-filled gravel pit. He struggled to stay afloat in an area of open water, at a point about 15 feet from the closest bank. Air and water temperatures were frigid. Driving past the pit, Nickels, 40, welding equipment maintenance repairman, saw movement in the water and stopped to investigate. Discovering Kendall's plight, Nickels called 911, then stepped onto solid ice and, lying on his stomach, inched his way toward Kendall, who was in water at least six feet deep. Nickels intended to reach Kendall with his belt, but, after going about 10 feet, he too broke through the ice. He plunged into the water head first, losing his eyeglasses. Nickels made his way a few feet to Kendall, grasped him, and swam through the open water back to the edge of the pit. He pushed Kendall out of the water, then exited the pit himself. Arriving rescue workers took Kendall to the hospital, where he was kept overnight. Nickels also required hospital treatment, for hypothermia, and he fully recovered within a few days.

77468-8870

DAMION DEROBPIO
Struthers, Ohio

Damion DeRobbio helped to rescue Mackenzie N. Palmer from burning, Pulaski, Pennsylvania, April 22, 2004. Mackenzie, 6, was in a bedroom of her family's one-story house after fire broke out in the adjoining living room at night. Her mother fled the house after conditions prevented her from reaching the bedroom. She alerted a neighbor, DeRobbio, 25, laborer, who responded to the scene. DeRobbio and an off-duty police officer who also responded attempted to gain entry to the house through a rear window, but they were unsuccessful. The officer then broke out a side window to Mackenzie's room and, stepping on a chair, attempted to climb through, but his duty belt prevented him from clearing the narrow opening. DeRobbio then stepped on the chair, entered the smoke-filled bedroom through the window, and dropped to the floor. He crawled to Mackenzie's bed, grasped her, then returned to the window with her. DeRobbio handed Mackenzie through the window to the officer, then exited the house through the window himself. Mackenzie was taken to the hospital, where she was detained for treatment of smoke inhalation. She recovered. DeRobbio sustained cuts to his knee and shoulders and minor smoke inhalation, and he too recovered.

77606-8871

KARL VAARTJES
Mississauga, Ontario

Karl Vaartjes rescued Deborah A. Fowler and Ryland C. Jacobs from an attacking dog, Mississauga, Ontario, December 8, 2003. Fowler, 36, and her son, Ryland, 4, were playing in the front yard of their house when a 45-pound pit bull and another dog approached. The pit bull attacked Ryland, biting him on the wrist. It then attacked Fowler when she attempted to fight it off. Vaartjes, 43, technical director, who lived about 300 feet away, had seen the dogs earlier and was outside to investigate when he heard Fowler calling for help. He ran toward the scene, and when he had approached to about 10 feet from Fowler and Ryland, the pit bull lunged at him, biting him in the arm. The dog then resumed its attack on Ryland. Vaartjes lifted Ryland by his coat and held him up, out of the dog's reach, but the dog bit Vaartjes in the leg. Fowler pulled the dog from Vaartjes and secured it while Vaartjes took Ryland to safety. Vaartjes then returned and held the dog to allow Fowler to flee. A police officer arrived within minutes and took control of the dog. Fowler, Ryland, and Vaartjes were taken to the hospital for treatment of their bite and puncture wounds, Fowler's and Vaartjes's requiring sutures.

77425-8872

KEVIN JAMES CROWLEY
Cardington, Ohio

Kevin James Crowley saved Garrett M. Bowers and Lawrence W. Ashman from burning, Mount Vernon, Ohio, January 17, 2004. Garrett, 17, remained in the driver's seat, and Lawrence, 17, in the front passenger seat, of a car that caught fire at its rear end in a highway accident. Crowley, 47, charity director, was the passenger in the other car involved in the accident. After securing the safety of that car's driver, Crowley responded to the driver's side of the burning car, despite his having sustained a head wound in the accident that was bleeding. He opened the door, released Garrett's safety belt, and removed him from the car, in which flames had spread to the back seat. After moving Garrett to safety, Crowley went to the front passenger door of the car but found it locked. He broke out the door's window, reached in, and opened the door. Leaning into the car, Crowley released Lawrence's safety belt, then grasped Lawrence, who was unconscious, and pulled him from the car. He dragged Lawrence to safety less than a minute before flames engulfed the car. Garrett and Lawrence, whose hair was singed, required hospital treatment for injuries sustained in the accident. Crowley also was treated at the hospital, for his head wound. All recovered. 77499-8873

FRANK L. JACKSON
Bethesda, Maryland

Frank L. Jackson helped to save Pavel Hruban from drowning, Potomac, Maryland, September 21, 2003. Hruban, 24, entered the Potomac River in Mather Gorge to swim, despite the extremely turbulent water and strong current, the result of a hurricane just days earlier that left the river above flood stage. He was immediately pulled downstream. Jackson, 19, college student, was in a kayak along the opposite bank of the river in that vicinity when he saw Hruban struggling about 50 feet away. Jackson set out after Hruban and met up with him downstream. Hruban grasped the side of the kayak, causing it to list. On instruction by Jackson, Hruban grasped the handle at the back of the craft and held to it as Jackson attempted to paddle back to the bank. Drag provided by Hruban plus the strength of the current overpowered Jackson's attempts, and the kayak was taken about a mile downstream. Near the end of the gorge, the kayak entered a stretch of rapids, and Hruban lost his grip. Jackson maneuvered the craft around for Hruban to re-establish his hold, and the kayak then continued through the remaining rapids. The river widened beyond the gorge and at that point contained a rocky island, which that day was almost inundated. The current took the kayak to the island, where breaking water overturned it, throwing Jackson into the river. Hruban, still holding to the craft, was pulled farther downstream, where he was able to swim ashore. Jackson climbed onto the island, then was aided to the bank by others using a line. A water rescue team arrived and took Hruban and Jackson to safety. They were tired but not seriously injured, Jackson requiring hospital treatment for abrasions and bruises. He recovered. 77296-8878

FRANK L. HUBBARD
Goldston, North Carolina

Frank L. Hubbard rescued Terry D. Thompson from burning, Sanford, North Carolina, March 11, 2004. Thompson, 60, was unconscious in the driver's seat of a pickup truck after it collided with a tractor-trailer at an intersection. Flames immediately broke out at the pickup and grew rapidly, entering the cab of that vehicle and spreading to the tractor. Hubbard, 43, driver of the tractor-trailer, exited his truck's cab and went to the driver's door of the pickup. He opened the door to find Thompson unresponsive and restrained by his safety belt. Despite flames in the cab that ignited the legs of Thompson's pants, Hubbard extended his upper body into the vehicle and cut the safety belt with a pocketknife. He then grasped Thompson by his jacket, pulled him out of the pickup, and dragged him away from the wreckage, which soon became engulfed by flames. Thompson was hospitalized six days for treatment of his injuries, which included second-degree burns. He recovered. Hubbard sustained a back injury in the accident that required medical attention. 77582-8881

MARK RICHARD BRADLEY
Braintree, Massachusetts

Mark Richard Bradley saved Catherine M. O'Connor from assault, Braintree, Massachusetts, August 28, 2003. O'Connor, 43, was stopped in her car in traffic on a highway off-ramp when two men approached her vehicle. One man opened the rear door of her car, got into the back seat, and pointed a handgun at her, and the second entered the front seat. O'Connor shouted for help. In his pickup truck on the ramp behind O'Connor's vehicle, Bradley, 31, court officer, saw the situation develop. He shouted at the assailants as he approached in his truck, then he moved the vehicle forward and intentionally struck the front driver's side of O'Connor's car to push it into the guide rail and block it there. The assailants exited the car and fled the scene. They were apprehended several days later. Bradley sustained a laceration to his leg; he recovered.

77150-8874

CHRISTOPHER CRANFORD
Humble, Texas

Christopher Cranford rescued a woman from a runaway automobile, Houston, Texas, November 14, 2003. A 47-year-old woman was the passenger of an automobile being driven on a beltway when the car was struck by a 300-pound tire that had detached from a tractor-trailer traveling on the same highway. The driver of the car was killed instantly, and the car continued forward, out of control. It veered in and out of the inner emergency lane, striking the concrete medial barrier repeatedly. Another motorist, Cranford, 18, plumber, was traveling behind the car and witnessed the accident, then, passing, saw the woman struggling to control the car. Cranford drove his half-ton pickup truck into the emergency lane at a point about 30 feet ahead of the car and removed his foot from the accelerator. After having traveled out of control for a half-mile, the car, then going about 45 m.p.h., struck the back of the pickup, pushing it forward 10 feet. Cranford applied his vehicle's brakes and took both vehicles to a stop. The woman was not badly injured. Cranford sustained back pain and soreness, and he recovered within a week.

77301-8875

RALPH SUMNER, JR.
Kinston, North Carolina

Ralph Sumner, Jr., helped to rescue Gary V. Coombs from burning, Kinston, North Carolina, December 25, 2003. Coombs, 51, lay unconscious on the floor of a bedroom in one end of his mobile home after fire erupted in another room. Other residents of the neighborhood, including Sumner, 51, pool builder, saw smoke issuing from the structure and responded to the scene. After one of the men broke open the back door and attempted to remove Coombs, Sumner entered the mobile home and took to the floor because of the dense smoke. He crawled through a hall toward the room in which Coombs had been heard, then, hearing Coombs moan, he entered the room and found Coombs on the floor. Sumner grasped Coombs by one of his ankles, then crawled about nine feet back to the door, pulling him. There, others helped to take Coombs from the mobile home and to safety. Coombs was hospitalized with severe burns and succumbed to his injuries five days later.

77447-8876

STEVE J. SCIORTINO
Colusa, California

Steve J. Sciortino saved Richard M. Delafuente from burning, Colusa, California, November 19, 2003. Delafuente, 35, lay semiconscious inside his car after a nighttime accident in which the vehicle overturned and caught fire in its engine compartment. Sciortino, 51, draft technician, who lived nearby, heard the accident, then responded to the scene after reporting it. Despite the flames, which were spreading rapidly, Sciortino approached the passenger side of the car, partially entered head first through the window of the front door, and grasped Delafuente by the arms. As Delafuente outweighed him, Sciortino had difficulty in pulling him from the vehicle. Sciortino dragged Delafuente to safety, flames soon entering the inside of the car and nearly engulfing it. Delafuente required hospital treatment for his injuries.

77569-8877

JAMES W. RODIN
Pismo Beach, California

ALEJANDRO J. MUÑOZ
Fontana, California

James W. Rodin and Alejandro J. Muñoz rescued Frances B. Coon from burning, San Lucas, California, January 16, 2004. Coon, 46, was the front-seat passenger in a sport utility vehicle that crashed on an interstate highway before dawn. The vehicle rolled over in the accident but came to rest upright, flames breaking out at its front end and spreading. Coon, injured and dazed, remained in her seat. Responding motorists included Rodin, 41, power plant operator. He attempted to open the front passenger door while another responding motorist, Muñoz, 31, truck driver, tried to put out the flames with a fire extinguisher. Neither attempt was successful. As flames reached the vehicle's dashboard, Rodin opened the rear passenger door and worked to free Coon from her seat. He then entered the back seat from the left rear door and, aided by Muñoz, pulled Coon into the back seat area. They removed her from the vehicle through the left rear door and carried her away shortly before flames engulfed the vehicle's interior. Coon required hospitalization for her injuries, which included minor burns, and Rodin sustained a cut on his hand. They recovered. 77520-8879 / 77521-8880

KEVIN R. MINEHART
Columbus, Ohio

Kevin R. Minehart rescued Mark A. and James S. Boyd from burning, Columbus, Ohio, January 26, 2004. Mark, 3, and his grandfather, Boyd, 64, lay unconscious in a ground-floor bedroom of their home after fire broke out in an adjacent room and spread. Minehart, 29, steel fabricator, was driving in the neighborhood and stopped at the scene when he saw smoke issuing from the house. Learning that Mark remained inside the burning structure, Minehart broke out a window to the bedroom, then climbed through it. Heat was intense in the room, and through the dense smoke he could see little except the glow of flames through the open bedroom door. Crawling along the walls to avoid becoming disoriented, Minehart came across Mark, who was lying on the floor, unconscious. He carried Mark to the window and passed him outside. Before leaving the house himself, Minehart learned that Boyd also was probably inside the room. He retraced his course, going farther to find Boyd lying unconscious on the floor at the doorway to the living room. By then, flames had spread to the wall and ceiling above the doorway. Minehart stood and dragged Boyd to the window, then pushed him out before climbing out himself. Mark suffered smoke inhalation, as did Boyd, who sustained also burns to his upper body. Both were hospitalized. Minehart was treated at the scene for cuts to his hands, and he recovered. 77494-8882

ROBERT L. PRYOR
Ridgeley, West Virginia

HOWARD R. TALBOTT
Bedford, Pennsylvania

Robert L. Pryor and Howard R. Talbott attempted to save Deborah C. Whiteman from being struck by a moving vehicle, Wiley Ford, West Virginia, January 14, 2004. Whiteman, 50, was trapped inside her pickup truck, which overturned onto its passenger side during a skidding accident on a snowy night. The truck lay partially on one of the highway lanes. Driving on the same highway, Pryor, 66, retired manager, came upon the scene. He went to the underside of the truck and opened its driver's door. Another motorist, Talbott, 61, also stopped at the scene, and he responded to the opposite side of the truck, at its roof. As the men worked to free Whiteman, who emerged head first through the driver's doorway, a rollback truck approached in the same lane. Pryor shouted a warning, then dived to the side of the highway. The rollback truck struck Whiteman's pickup, knocking it onto its roof. Whiteman was aided from the wreckage and taken to the hospital, where she was treated for bruises, and Pryor sustained a sprained hand and arm. They recovered. Talbott was seriously injured in the accident and required six days' hospitalization for treatment, including surgery. 77619-8883 / 77572-8884

CARNEGIE MEDAL



ANDREW CARNEGIE

