



CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION
Recognizing civilian heroism in the United States and Canada

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News Release

FOR RELEASE:
December 22, 2014

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**CARNEGIE MEDALS AWARDED TO 19
 FOR ACTS OF EXTRAORDINARY CIVILIAN HEROISM**

PITTSBURGH, PA, December 22, 2014—In its fourth and final award announcement of 2014, the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission today named 19 individuals as recipients of the CARNEGIE MEDAL. The medal is given throughout the United States and Canada to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others.

Two of the rescues took place on Christmas Day, 2013: Richard L. Blessen, 45, a college administrator, saved two boys who had fallen through thin ice on a pond in Duncan, Neb., and Donald E. Thompson, 54, an off-duty police officer, pulled a man from the fiery wreckage of his car after a freeway accident in Los Angeles.

The heroes announced today bring to 84 the number of awards made in 2014 and to 9,737 the total number of awards made since the Pittsburgh-based Fund's inception in 1904. Commission Chair Mark Laskow stated that each of the awardees or their survivors will also receive a financial grant. Throughout the 110 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, \$36.7 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance. The awardees are:

Frederick J. Levesque, Jr.	Stafford Springs, Conn.
Brent Allen Thoele	Shorewood, Ill.
Pawel L. Kruszewski	Auburn, Maine
Donald Schaus, Sr.	Katonah, N.Y.
Bernard Kozen	Tobyhanna, Pa.
Richard L. Blessen	Crete, Neb.
Gregory D. Plancich	Vashon, Wash.
Daniel C. Hardwick	Vashon, Wash.
Jim O. Fultz	Siletz, Ore.
Wayne Kitt	Loon Lake, Wash.
Samuel Irick, <i>deceased</i>	Houston, Texas
Clifford Faraci	Desert Hills, Ariz.
Donald E. Thompson	West Hills, Calif.
Paul W. Mongiello	Overland Park, Kan.
Jonathan A. Barthel	Lake Norden, S.D.
James M. Kocker	Poulsbo, Wash.
Ronnie Lee Moore, Jr.	Hortense, Ga.
John Shannon Gibson	Woodbine, Ga.
Jeffrey A. Johnson	North Freedom, Wis.

Resumes of the acts follow. To nominate someone for the CARNEGIE MEDAL, write the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, 436 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1101, 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

FREDERICK J. LEVESQUE, JR.
Stafford Springs, Connecticut

Frederick J. Levesque, Jr., rescued Kerra R. Colgan from burning, Somers, Connecticut, December 4, 2013. Kerra, 7, was in her family's apartment, which was on the second floor of a two-story building, after fire broke out in one of the unit's bedrooms. Levesque, 52, retired corrections administrator, was driving by and saw flames and smoke issuing from the bedroom's window. He stopped at the scene, as did other motorists, who gained entry to the building through its front door. Levesque responded to the rear of the building, entered it through the back door, and climbed an interior stairway to the second floor. He forced open the burning apartment's back door and entered the unit but was forced out because of dense smoke. Entering a second time, shouting, he heard Kerra's voice, but the smoke forced him out again. A third time Levesque entered the apartment, but crawling. Despite limited visibility, he advanced through the smoke following Kerra's voice and found her on the floor. Grasping her, he backed to the door, pulling her, and then stood, picked Kerra up, and took her downstairs and outside to safety. Kerra was hospitalized for treatment of smoke inhalation and minor burns, and she recovered. Levesque inhaled smoke and was given oxygen at the scene, and he too recovered.

86250-9719

BRETT ALLEN THOELE
Shorewood, Illinois

Brett Allen Thoele helped to save a man from drowning, Branson, Missouri, June 28, 2013. An unidentified man was swimming in the designated swimming area off a beach at Table Rock Lake when he began to struggle and yell for help at a point about 220 feet from the bank. Water there was about 20 feet deep. He drew the attention of other swimmers, including Thoele, 36, off-duty police officer, who was standing in wadable water near the bank. Thoele swam to the victim, as did a second man, but the victim lunged at the other man and submerged him, after which he swam away. When Thoele approached the victim, the victim lunged at him also and submerged him. Thoele surfaced, but the victim continued to struggle and submerged him twice more. Surfacing, Thoele struck the victim to subdue him. The victim then cooperative, Thoele towed him toward the bank. They were met by the other man, who was returning with an inflatable paddle board. The victim lay on the board as Thoele and the other man took him to the bank. The victim lay there exhausted. Thoele had ingested water and was extremely fatigued but recovered that day.

85947-9720

PAWEL L. KRUSZEWSKI
Auburn, Maine

Pawel L. Kruszewski saved David W. and Ronald R. Call and Robert Hack from burning, Auburn, Maine, September 10, 2013. David, 40, and Ronald, 48, were passengers in a sport utility vehicle being driven by Hack, 43. In an accident on a rural road, the vehicle left the roadway and, overturning, came to rest on its roof. Kruszewski, 28, production supervisor, drove upon the scene and stopped. When flames then broke out on the exposed underside of the vehicle, Kruszewski opened the rear, passenger-side door and extended his upper body inside. He grasped David and pulled him from the vehicle. David walked to safety. Kruszewski then fully entered the vehicle, grasped Ronald by the arm, and, helping him from the front seat into the back-seat area, pulled him out to safety. Despite flames spreading on the vehicle's underside, Kruszewski entered a third time to find Hack inverted in the driver's seat, secured by his safety belt and wreckage. Kruszewski released the safety belt and maneuvered Hack to the rear-seat area. With help from Ronald, Kruszewski pulled Hack from the vehicle and walked him away. The vehicle was shortly engulfed by flames. The three victims suffered minor injuries, and Kruszewski sustained lacerations to a hand. He recovered.

85929-9721

DONALD SCHAUS, SR.
Katonah, New York

Donald Schaus, Sr., rescued Richard J. Fitzgerald from burning, Bedford Hills, New York, February 27, 2014. Fitzgerald, 82, was in his ground-floor apartment after flames erupted in the unit and filled it with dense smoke. Schaus, 52, the apartment facility's superintendent, was alerted to the fire. Responding to the scene, he attempted to unlock the apartment's door but was not successful. He then kicked the door in to find that smoke in the apartment severely restricted visibility. After entering the unit but being repulsed by smoke, he yelled inside and heard Fitzgerald groan. Schaus entered the apartment a second time, but crawling, and found Fitzgerald lying on a bed about 10 feet from the door. Schaus pulled Fitzgerald from the bed and started to drag him to the door, but an ottoman blocked his path. Releasing Fitzgerald, he picked up the ottoman and threw it from the apartment. He then returned to Fitzgerald and dragged him outside, where he used snow from the ground to extinguish flames on his clothing and body. Fitzgerald was taken to the hospital but died there the next day of his injuries. Schaus also required hospital treatment, for smoke inhalation, and he fully recovered.

86404-9722

BERNARD KOZEN
Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania

Bernard Kozen helped to rescue victims from an armed assault, Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, August 5, 2013. Kozen, 56, park director, and 20 others were at a meeting in a municipal building when a man fired several rounds from a semi-automatic rifle through a window and into the meeting room. The room's occupants scattered, with some attempting to flee the building and others taking refuge behind an overturned table. Kozen stood out of sight in a corner as the assailant continued to fire, during which he struck six of the victims, mortally wounding three. The assailant then went to a car parked near the building and obtained a revolver. Seeing him approach the building again, Kozen shouted a warning and then sought refuge in an office near the meeting room. The assailant entered the building, fired a shot into the meeting room, and then entered that room. Kozen stepped from the office and, although a course to the building's front door was open to him, entered the meeting room and charged the assailant from behind. He struggled against the assailant for control of the gun, which fired again. A man from the room joined in the struggle, and together he and Kozen overpowered the assailant, taking him to the floor. They disarmed and held him until police arrived and arrested him.

85961-9723

RICHARD L. BLESSEN
Crete, Nebraska

Richard L. Blessen helped to save Seth Albert and Bryar Alvarado-Meyer from drowning, Duncan, Nebraska, December 25, 2013. Stepbrothers Seth and Bryar, both 14, broke through the ice covering a channel of Duncan Lakes at points about 90 and 60 feet, respectively, from the nearer bank. Unable to extract themselves, they clung to solid ice and shouted for help. Visiting at a home on the far bank in that vicinity, Blessen, 45, college administrator, heard the boys and alerted help. He then took a 17-foot aluminum canoe and flotation devices from that property to the channel and pushed the canoe out onto the ice about 30 feet toward the boys. Fearing that the ice would not hold, Blessen then entered the canoe and continued his advance by using his fingernails against the ice. When the canoe broke through the ice at a point about 10 feet from Seth, Blessen used his hands to break a path to the boy. He gave Seth a foam tube, secured a life vest around him, and guided him to an inner tube that was tied to the back of the canoe. Using a paddle, Blessen then turned the canoe and broke a path through the ice to reach Bryar, whom he also secured with a foam tube and life jacket. Blessen held to both boys along one side of the canoe as attempts to throw lines to them were made by neighbors and first responders who were gathering on both banks. Grasping the line thrown by men on the nearer bank, Blessen tied it to the canoe, and the canoe was pulled to that bank. The boys were taken to the hospital and treated for hypothermia, and they recovered. Blessen was cold and very tired after the rescue, and he sustained minor scrapes and bruises, from which he recovered.

86388-9729

GREGORY D. PLANCICH
DANIEL C. HARDWICK
Vashon, Washington

JIM O. FULTZ
Siletz, Oregon

WAYNE KITT
Loon Lake, Washington

Gregory D. Plancich, Daniel C. Hardwick, Jim O. Fultz, and Wayne Kitt saved Steven W. Stark and four others from drowning, Kodiak, Alaska, January 25, 2012. Stark, 40, was the captain of a 67-foot fishing boat, the *Heritage*, which became disabled while crossing Alitak Bay off the Gulf of Alaska at Kodiak Island during a severe storm before dawn. The engine compartment flooded, and the vessel capsized and sank, sending Stark and its six other occupants into the frigid water at a point about four miles from the nearer shore. Stark and four others of the crew were able to board a life raft. After becoming aware of the situation by radio, Plancich, 58, the captain of another commercial fishing vessel, the 101-foot *Tuxedni*, alerted his crew, comprising Hardwick, 53, engineer; Fultz, 48, tenderman; and Kitt, 35, deckhand. Despite darkness, sustained winds of 66 m.p.h. gusting to 75 m.p.h. that engendered 25-foot seas, a sub-zero air temperature, and blowing snow, the four men immediately left safe mooring in a bay off the nearer shore. They took the *Tuxedni* about four miles over the course of an hour to the last known location of the *Heritage*. Waves broke over the boat en route, and freezing spray impeded visibility and caused the boat to accumulate ice. After Fultz, from the deck, spotted a light from the life raft, Plancich, in two attempts, positioned the *Tuxedni* close to and upwind of the raft, using hand signals from Hardwick. Kitt then threw a line to the raft and with Fultz drew it next to the *Tuxedni*. One by one, the five men in the life raft jumped onto the side of the boat, Stark last, timing their jumps to the swells, and then were hauled aboard the *Tuxedni* by its crew. Learning by radio that a Coast Guard helicopter had rescued the two others from the *Heritage*, Plancich and his crew returned the *Tuxedni* through unabated conditions to safe mooring at the nearer shore. No one was injured. 85826-9724 / 85827-9725 / 85828-9726 / 85829-9727

SAMUEL IRICK, deceased
Houston, Texas

Samuel Irick died after rescuing Amberly A. Wait from assault, Houston, Texas, November 11, 2010. At night, Wait, 44, was standing outside a convenience store, at its service window, when a man approached, laid a hand on her, and asked for her purse. He held what she concluded was a gun against her. Irick, 24, machinist and college student, had been nearby, pumping gasoline. Wait broke free of the assailant as Irick advanced. As she entered the store for refuge, she heard a confrontation between Irick and the assailant, and then gunfire. The assailant fled, and Irick was next seen by Wait in the store, lying mortally wounded on the floor, where he was being attended by another woman. Police arrived shortly. Irick was taken to the hospital, but he could not be revived. 83641-9728

CLIFFORD FARACI
Desert Hills, Arizona

Clifford Faraci attempted to save Shelby N. Dwyer from burning, Phoenix, Arizona, March 14, 2013. Dwyer, 19, was trapped in the front seats of the car she had been driving after a multi-vehicle highway accident. Faraci, 43, mechanical contractor, was traveling on the same highway at the time and stopped at the scene. He responded to the driver's side of Dwyer's badly damaged car, saw her inside, and attempted to open the driver's door but was unsuccessful. Speaking to Dwyer to reassure her, Faraci saw smoke issuing from under the car's hood. He extended an arm into the vehicle through the window opening of the driver's door to turn the car's ignition off but could not reach it. As Faraci then extended his upper body into the car to gain access to the switch, the car burst into flames, which enveloped him. Withdrawing, he put out the flames that were on his pants and boots. Faraci turned to go back to the car, but an explosion engulfed it with flames. Dwyer died at the scene. Faraci was taken by ambulance to the hospital, where he was detained a week for treatment of second-degree burns to his hands and arms. 86510-9734

DONALD E. THOMPSON
West Hills, California

Donald E. Thompson rescued William F. McWhorter II from burning, Los Angeles, California, December 25, 2013. Unconscious, McWhorter, 72, remained in the driver's seat of his automobile after an interstate highway accident in which the vehicle struck the concrete medial barrier and burst into flames at its rear end. The car stopped adjacent to the barrier. Thompson, 54, off-duty police officer, was driving on the same highway and witnessed the accident. He stopped at the scene, jumped over the barrier, and responded to the driver's side of the car. Despite significant flames issuing 15 feet from the back of the car and spreading rapidly toward the front, Thompson opened the driver's door, with difficulty, and, using the opened door as a shield against the advancing flames, extended his upper body inside the vehicle. Heat was intense in the vicinity of the car. Searching for McWhorter's safety belt release, Thompson sustained a burn to his right hand and arm and retracted momentarily. He reached again, released the belt, and then, moving around the door, grasped McWhorter by the shirt and pulled him from the car. Two other men who had responded took McWhorter over the barrier, and one of them then pulled Thompson over as flames filled the car's interior. McWhorter required hospital treatment for his injuries, including minor burns. Thompson suffered burns, including second-degree, to his face, arms, and hand, for which he too received medical treatment. Both men recovered. 86271-9731

PAUL W. MONGIELLO
Overland Park, Kansas

Paul W. Mongiello rescued Lindsay Simmons and Patrick H. Woodward from burning, Kansas City, Missouri, February 19, 2013. Simmons and Woodward, 33, were inside the restaurant where they were employed when natural gas that had leaked into the one-story building exploded. The massive explosion caused the building's roof and most of its walls to collapse, and the resulting debris caught fire. Mongiello, 57, insurance executive, was in his car at the intersection next to the restaurant at the time, the blast rocking his vehicle. He parked nearby and, responding to the scene on foot, heard screams coming from the debris field. Seeing Simmons standing just inside the building, he walked through debris to reach her and then placed her on his back and carried her outside to safety. Returning to the site, he was told by another employee, who had just made it to safety himself, that the restaurant was still occupied. The two men entered the part of the structure that remained essentially intact and, despite growing flames feeding throughout the remains of the structure, made their way through debris to find Woodward. As he had done with Simmons, Mongiello positioned Woodward on his back and carried him outside to safety. Within moments, flames engulfed the wreckage and issued high over it. Another employee of the restaurant died at the scene, and several others were injured. Woodward required hospitalization for treatment of burns, and Mongiello recovered from smoke inhalation. 85729-9732

JONATHAN A. BARTHEL
Lake Norden, South Dakota

Jonathan A. Barthel helped to save Kyan J. and Daniel J. M. Overbo from drowning, Lake Norden, South Dakota, April 21, 2014. After falling into the frigid water of Lake Poinsett after their canoe tipped, Kyan, 9, sat atop the submerged craft as his father, Overbo, 37, struggled to push it toward the bank. They shouted for help. Sleeping at his home nearby, Barthel, 21, a deputy sheriff then off duty, was alerted to the situation. He ran, barefoot, about 2,000 feet to a point on the bank opposite Kyan and Overbo. Wearing only gym shorts, Barthel entered the water, the temperature of which was about 40 degrees, and waded and then swam about 150 feet to the canoe. He lifted Kyan from the canoe, swam and waded back toward the bank, and handed Kyan over to his mother, who was in wadable water. Barthel then returned to Overbo, who, nearly exhausted, had continued toward the bank. He aided Overbo from the lake and took him to his nearby home, where he and Kyan were warmed. Overbo later sought medical treatment for ill effects of being in the water, but he recovered. Barthel suffered knee pain but recovered that day. 86520-9733

JAMES M. KOCKER
Poulsbo, Washington

James M. Kocker helped to save Anthony S. Johnson from drowning, Ellensburg, Washington, October 12, 2013. Johnson, 30, was the driver of a four-door sedan that in an accident left the highway, went down an embankment, and entered a pond. Unconscious, he remained in the driver's seat as the car began to submerge in the six-foot-deep murky and cold water at a point about 50 feet from the bank. Motorists, including Kocker, 53, maintenance manager, stopped at the scene. Kocker waded into the pond and swam to the car but was unable to open its doors. He returned to the bank for a tool. A state trooper who had responded by then swam to the car with Kocker and broke out a rear window. More water entered the car, and it sank to its roof, submerging Johnson. Kocker went to the driver's door, opened it, and, submerging, entered the car and freed Johnson of his safety belt. He then pulled Johnson from the car and to the surface and with the trooper swam back to the bank with him. All three men were treated by responding emergency medical personnel for exposure to cold water, and Johnson required hospitalization. They recovered. 86133-9730

RONNIE LEE MOORE, JR.
Hortense, Georgia

JOHN SHANNON GIBSON
Woodbine, Georgia

Ronnie Lee Moore, Jr., and John Shannon Gibson rescued Deborah A. Johns from burning, Waverly, Georgia, October 10, 2013. Johns, 47, was trapped inside her car after a nighttime accident in which the vehicle left the roadway, struck a tree head on, and broke into flames at its front end. Moore, 42, machinist, was driving on the same highway and came upon the scene. Responding to the burning car, he tried to open its doors but was not successful. He then flagged down another motorist, Gibson, 45, mechanic, who obtained his fire extinguisher and used it against the flames. With flames persisting, and growing, Moore and Gibson worked to open the driver's door, bending down its window frame. Although flames by then were spreading inside the car, to its dashboard and headliner, Moore leaned through the window opening to his waist and grasped Johns under her arms. He began to pull her from the vehicle but found that her legs were trapped in the wreckage. Gibson extended his upper body through the window opening into the car and freed her legs. The men then removed Johns completely from the car and carried her to safety as flames continued to grow, soon to engulf the vehicle. Johns required hospital treatment for extensive injuries, including minor burns. 86126-9735 / 86127-9736

JEFFREY A. JOHNSON
North Freedom, Wisconsin

Jeffrey A. Johnson helped to save Robert J. Schuster from drowning, Briggsville, Wisconsin, April 5, 2014. While returning to the bank after ice fishing on Lake Mason, Schuster, 80, broke through ice at a point about 300 feet from the closer bank. Failing to establish a hold on solid ice, he trod water and shouted for help. Johnson, 48, heating and cooling technician, was on the bank in that vicinity, having left the ice after fishing when he became aware of deteriorating ice conditions. He saw Schuster break through and called 911. After searching along the bank for a rescue tool, Johnson pushed a 12-foot-long branch in front of him as he walked to a point about 25 feet from Schuster. He slid the branch toward Schuster, but it fell short. Johnson returned to the bank, where he found a wooden frame about nine feet long. He advanced on the ice toward Schuster a second time, pushing on the frame to distribute his weight. Getting closer to Schuster that time, Johnson extended one end of the frame to him, and Schuster grabbed it. As Johnson then attempted to pull Schuster from the water, he too broke through. Firefighters arrived shortly and pulled Schuster, and then Johnson, from the water and returned them to the bank. The men required emergency-room treatment for hypothermia, and they recovered. 86529-9737

CARNEGIE MEDAL



ANDREW CARNEGIE

