



CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION

436 Seventh Ave., Suite 1101 Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1841
412-281-1302 | 1-800-447-8900 | fax: 412-281-5751 | carnegiehero.org

News release

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Contact: Jewels Phraner
1-800-447-8900

Eighteen will receive Carnegie Medal for extraordinary acts of heroism

PITTSBURGH, March 17, 2020 — The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission today announced 17 Americans and one Canadian have been named Carnegie heroes for entering into mortal danger to rescue others. They each will receive the Carnegie Medal – the highest honor for civilian heroism in the U.S. and Canada – for risking their lives while trying to save others from life-threatening perils that include an attacking dog, armed robbers, and a gunman who opened fire in a yoga studio. Those who died in their rescue attempts will receive the Medal posthumously. They include **Kristina Jean Stratton** who was trapped by fire while attempting to save her children from an upstairs room in her burning home; **Jacob Farley**, 26, who kept afloat a woman who was caught in the boil at a low-head dam until rescuers arrived, before he submerged and drowned; and 22-year-old **Victor Mozqueda**, who, despite not knowing how to swim, entered a cold, swift river after his friend’s 5-year-old boy fell in. The boy was saved, but Mozqueda drowned.

The Carnegie Medal is given throughout the U.S. and Canada to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others. With this first announcement of 2020 recipients, a total of 10,153 Carnegie Medals have been awarded since the Pittsburgh-based Fund’s inception in 1904. Commission Chair Mark Laskow said each of the awardees or their survivors will also receive a financial grant. Throughout the 116 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, \$41.7 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance.

The awardees are:

Ernest J. Tarsitano	Galloway, N.J.	Kristina Jean Stratton*	Bakersfield, Calif.
Jacob Farley*	Wichita, Kan.	Victor Mozqueda*	Newhall, Calif.
Kenneth L. Hamilton	San Antonio	Ann Rothpletz	Louisville, Ky.
Cameron K. Hanson	Fergus Falls, Minn.	Yun Qi	Richmond, B.C.
Arthur Ray Whitham, Jr.	Lincoln, Ill.	Nicholas Stephen Siokalo	Lutherville, Md.
Thomas H. Hunnicutt	Phoenix	V. Thomas Hayes, Sr.	Barnhart, Mo.
Douglas Leroy Tallman, Sr.	Marysville, Calif.	Joshua Ryan Quick	Tallahassee, Fla.
Katherine M. Wenzell	Milwaukee	Joseph A. Arsenault, Jr.	Farmington, Maine
Kenneth Alfred	Vista, Calif.	Nicholas Claudel	Belgrade, Maine

*deceased

Summaries of the acts to follow. To nominate someone for the Carnegie Medal, complete a nomination form online or write to the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, 436 Seventh Ave., Suite 1101, Pittsburgh, PA 15219. More information on the Carnegie Medal and the history of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission can be found at carnegiehero.org. Follow us on Facebook: [facebook.com/carnegiehero](https://www.facebook.com/carnegiehero) and Twitter: [@carnegie_hero](https://twitter.com/carnegie_hero).

Ernest J. Tarsitano

Retired firefighter Ernest J. Tarsitano, 60, was driving home when he noticed smoke pouring from a two-room cabin bungalow at a Galloway, N.J., motel July 26, 2018. He stopped at the scene and learned that 72-year-old Roderick R. Cormier was still inside. Despite dark, thick smoke and zero visibility, Tarsitano crawled into the home and searched for Cormier, locating him on the floor, limp, near flames. Tarsitano stood, grasping him, and dragged him while backing toward the door. As he neared the door, others assisted him in removing Cormier to safety. Cormier suffered burns and inhaled smoke and was taken to the hospital. He recovered. Paramedics at the scene treated Tarsitano, who had difficulty breathing and lacerations on his knees. He also recovered.

Jacob Farley (deceased)

A 26-year-old man will posthumously receive the Carnegie Medal. Jacob Farley, a floor installer from Wichita, Kan., drowned June 21, 2019, while keeping Madison L. Capps from drowning in the Elk River near Noel, Mo. Capps, 21, struggled in the boil at the base of a low-head dam; Farley went to her aid. As she grasped a raft, he swam from the river's south bank 25 feet to Capps, and positioned himself behind her. For 30 minutes, he repeatedly pushed her up, to keep her afloat. Fire personnel arrived and threw a rope to Capps, who grasped it and was pulled from the rolling boil. Farley submerged and did not resurface. Capps recovered.

Kenneth L. Hamilton

An off-duty campus police sergeant responded to a single-car accident occurring May 1, 2019, in San Antonio. The sedan overturned onto its passenger side and fire broke out in the engine. The car's driver, 48-year-old Tammy F. Cook, was held in her seat by the seat belt and, disoriented, she could not leave the car. Police Sergeant Kenneth L. Hamilton, 54, used a metal baton to attempt to break out the windshield, but it did not break through. Others nearby threw things at the windshield to weaken it, while Hamilton kicked it several times and then peeled it from its frame to create an opening near the ground. He reached through the opening and used a knife to cut Cook's seat belt. She tumbled from the driver's seat and scrambled to her hands and knees. Hamilton reached through the windshield opening, grasped her wrists, and pulled her from the car. He dragged her about 20 feet away and collapsed. Others moved Cook and Hamilton farther from the engulfed wreckage. Cook was not burned and recovered from accident injuries. Hamilton was treated for a strained shoulder as well as cuts and scrapes, but he, too, recovered.

Cameron K. Hanson

Cameron K. Hanson, a 37-year-old corrections officer of Fergus Falls, Minn., entered near-freezing water to rescue his friend, 65-year-old Leon G. Engelhart. Engelhart, Hanson, and others on Dec. 6, 2018, had been ice fishing on the ice-covered Wall Lake in Fergus Falls, staying away from a known area of open water. At night, Engelhart drove an ATV across the lake and entered the water. Hanson and another man went to the edge of the ice and Hanson entered the water. He swam about 75 feet to Engelhart and then towed him back to the edge of the ice by the back of his jacket. En route, Hanson submerged several times while attempting to keep Engelhart's head above water. At the edge of the ice, the other man assisted Engelhart and then Hanson back onto the ice and then performed CPR on Engelhart, who vomited water and began to breathe again. Engelhart was hospitalized for severe hypothermia and recovered. Although Hanson did not seek medical treatment, at the time of the investigation he said that he sustained nerve damage to his hands and feet and his fingers frequently lost feeling.

Arthur Ray Whitham, Jr.

When Lincoln, Ill., welder Arthur Ray Whitham, Jr., 46, witnessed a car slide off an ice-covered road into a nearby pond Dec. 4, 2018, in Lincoln, he stopped at the scene and entered the 35-degree water, wading and swimming to the car, where he could stand with the water was up to his chest. He grasped the top of the driver's window and forced it down completely. He reached through the window and grasped the driver, 68-year-old George L. Horn, and pulled him through the window opening. Whitham moved Horn to the rear of the car, where they held on and waited for authorities in the cold water. Horn was treated at the hospital for hypothermia. Whitham was cold after the rescue but did not seek medical treatment. They both recovered.

Thomas H. Hunnicutt

Phoenix resident Thomas H. Hunnicutt was riding in a car June 11, 2019, when he watched a single-engine airplane crash-land and overturn. Its fuselage and cockpit burst into flames. Hunnicutt, a 34-year-old project manager, ran to the plane, crawled beneath a wing, and extended his arms through a broken cockpit window toward pilot Mark Brandemuehl, 59, who was inside. Despite nearby flames and intense heat, Hunnicutt grasped Brandemuehl and pulled him through the opening. He dragged him several feet away from the plane's fuselage where others joined him and helped him carry Brandemuehl to safety. Brandemuehl was hospitalized for treatment of severe burns and died several months later.

Douglas Leroy Tallman, Sr.

A barber college student was eating breakfast with his family Feb. 27, 2019, at a Sacramento, Calif., diner when he saw a man pointing a pistol at the 19-year-old server at a register in the front of the restaurant. Douglas Leroy Tallman, Sr., 34, of Marysville, Calif., left his booth and walked toward the cashier. As he passed the man, he grasped the assailant's hand that was holding the gun and wrapped his arm around the assailant's throat. The two men struggled, Tallman taking the assailant to the floor. The server fled from the building. As Tallman's adolescent son approached, the gun discharged a single bullet, fragments striking him in the calf and foot. Tallman pushed the assailant away and took cover nearby. The assailant struggled to his feet, grabbed money, and fled. He was later arrested. The server was not injured. Tallman's son was treated for his wounds and recovered.

Katherine M. Wenzell

While on a family vacation, Katherine M. Wenzell sustained a severed toe, multiple fractures, internal contusions, and a concussion after being hit and dragged 50 feet by an Atlanta subway train after saving her 57-year-old mother from the same fate. On Aug. 19, 2018, Susan A. Wenzell was standing on a subway station platform when a man pushed her off the platform onto a track as a train approached. The younger Wenzell, a 28-year-old Milwaukee school teacher, jumped off the platform and unsuccessfully attempted to remove her mother from the path of the train. As the train bore down on them, Wenzell positioned Susan in the middle of the track so the train would pass over her. She also attempted to lay between the rails, but the train struck her and dragged her. Susan suffered a broken arm, concussion, back injury, and contusions to her body from being pushed onto the track, but she was not struck by the train. Wenzell, who was unconscious by the time the train came to a stop, was removed from the track by rescue personnel and underwent several surgeries for her injuries.

Kenneth Alfred

A 56-year-old mechanic ran across a parking lot after witnessing two men assaulting his neighbors on Sept. 22, 2019. Roxana Valdovinos and her wife were sitting in their vehicle at their Vista, Calif., condo complex when the men pulled up in a truck and approached their vehicle. One of the men opened the driver's door, pointed a knife at driver Valdovinos, 36, and demanded she exit the car. Her wife exited and screamed for help as the mechanic, Kenneth Alfred, responded. Valdovinos fended the assailant off with her feet until Alfred reached them, grasped the assailant's neck, and shoved him to the ground. The assailant stabbed Alfred in the abdomen, and then the second man pulled Alfred's shirt over his head, before they both fled in the truck. Alfred needed surgery for his wound and remained hospitalized for two days. He recovered in one month.

Kristina Jean Stratton (deceased)

A 38-year-old mother died Feb. 7, 2019, after entering her Bakersfield, Calif., burning home in search of three of her daughters. Kristina Jean Stratton was away from home when her 17-year-old daughter who was home with Stratton's younger daughters, ages 9 and 8, and son, called and said the home was on fire and she and the girls could not leave the second floor. The son had safely exited through the front door. Stratton returned home to find that flames had engulfed a downstairs bedroom and smoke obscured the top of the staircase. Meanwhile, the girls had exited out a second-floor window and made it safely to the ground of the home's backyard. Unable to hear them yelling from behind a backyard gate, Stratton entered the home and was not seen outside again. Firefighters found her in the younger girls' bedroom. Stratton, who had suffered burns and inhaled smoke, died. The three girls were taken to the hospital for treatment of smoke inhalation and recovered.

Victor Mozqueda (deceased)

A 22-year-old family friend jumped into the 60-degree Kaweah River in Sequoia National Park after 5-year-old Vincent Gonzalez, who had fallen in during a June 23, 2018, family outing. Fully clothed, Victor Mozqueda, a driver from Newhall, Calif., who could not swim, submerged with Vincent. They resurfaced and witnesses said Mozqueda kept Victor afloat. Vincent's parents and others entered the river, but could not help Mozqueda or Vincent, who eventually separated. The current brought Vincent near the bank, where he was removed from the river. A fisherman at the scene performed CPR, and Vincent was flown to a hospital where he recovered. Mozqueda drowned.

Ann Rothpletz

Billy D. Waugh, 49, and his friend were fishing July 7, 2017, in the Ohio River in Jeffersonville, Ind., when they were swept into deeper water. Waugh yelled for help, and, realizing he was in trouble, Ann Rothpletz, 46, university researcher of Louisville, Ky., entered the river and swam about 300 feet to him. By then Waugh was facedown in the water, unconscious. She turned him over and towed him by his collar to the bank where, unable to fully remove him from the river, she held his upper body above the water until rescue personnel arrived. Waugh was taken to the hospital where he was monitored for two days, but he was not injured. Rothpletz was tired and shaken after the rescue; she recovered. Waugh's friend drowned.

Yun Qi

Neighbor Yun Qi responded to a 4-year-old girl being attacked by a dog outside her home June 3, 2017, in Surrey, B.C. The girl and her sister screamed for help as the dog bit her leg and dragged her to the ground. Qi, 33, business operator, ran to the girl and yelled at the dog, who let go of the girl and attacked Qi, biting his hand, arms, and legs. He was knocked to the ground where the dog pinned him. Qi's father responded and, using a bicycle to protect himself, struck the dog, disrupting his attack on Qi, who escaped. The girl and her sister retreated to their home and the dog's owner arrived and took it back to his home. The girl was taken to the hospital where she was treated for bite wounds to her leg that required multiple surgeries. Qi was treated for a severe bite wound that caused some permanent damage and required surgery. Qi has since relocated to Richmond, B.C.

Nicholas Stephen Siokalo

Carnegie Hero Nicholas Stephen Siokalo saved 7-year-old Chase A. Hannawacker from drowning in the Atlantic Ocean Sept. 14, 2019, off the coast of Belmar, N.J. An aunt was holding Chase while wading in the ocean when a wave carried them away from shore to deeper water. They waved and shouted for help, and 27-year-old brand strategist Siokalo of Lutherville, Md., responded. As he swam toward them, another wave separated Chase from his aunt, with a rip current taking Chase to a point about 90 feet from shore. Siokalo reached Chase and carried him on his hip while Siokalo trod water. They submerged many times and were carried another 55 feet before alerted lifeguards responded with flotation devices and towed them to safety. Chase wasn't injured, but Siokalo was nearly exhausted, vomited, and swallowed water. An ambulance took him to the hospital where he was treated for several hours for symptoms of near drowning. He recovered.

V. Thomas Hayes, Sr.

Sixty-six-year-old retired mechanic V. Thomas Hayes, Sr., of Barnhart, Mo., was the first to enter a Byrnes Mill, Mo., home that collapsed after a Sept. 9, 2018, explosion in its basement level. Evelyn B.K. Ingoldsby, 56, and her husband were in the family room of the one-story house when the explosion occurred, trapping them in the debris. Shirtless, Hayes dug through debris at the front of the house and found a small opening to enter the home. From there, he advanced to Ingoldsby, who did not want to leave her husband. Holding to her clothing, Hayes pulled Ingoldsby toward the front of the house, where they became stuck in knee-deep rubble as fire spread through the house's main level. Hayes' son-in-law, who had also responded, freed Hayes and rescue personnel aided Ingoldsby to safety shortly before flames engulfed the entire house igniting ammunition that was stored throughout the home. Ingoldsby's husband did not survive. Ingoldsby was not burned, but she was treated for minor injuries sustained in the home's collapse. Hayes injured his left shoulder and had cuts to his legs.

Joshua Ryan Quick

Inside a Tallahassee, Fla., yoga classroom, 33-year-old law student Joshua Ryan Quick hit a gunman with a vacuum cleaner and broom while the man was trying to unjam or reload his gun after firing it a dozen times on Nov. 2, 2018, striking six women inside the room. Quick, of Tallahassee; his partner; and the class instructor hid in an alcove inside the room, while others stayed in the main part of the room. As the assailant focused his attention on the gun, Quick grabbed a vacuum cleaner and struck the assailant. The assailant hit him with the butt of the gun. Forfeiting his opportunity to flee, Quick grasped a nearby broom and hit the assailant over the head with it, but Quick was struck by the assailant again. Two women in the room fled during Quick's altercation with the gunman. Quick then fled himself, leading his partner by the hand. Shortly, the assailant fatally shot himself in the head. Two women died from gunshot wounds. Quick was treated at the hospital for a facial laceration; he recovered.

Joseph A. Arsenault, Jr., and Nicholas Claudel

Two men saved the driver of a tanker truck that was hauling 10,000 gallons of home heating fuel through Belgrade, Maine, when it overturned, spilled its contents, and caught fire after a Jan. 2, 2019, accident. Fuel on the road also caught fire. Mail carriers Joseph A. Arsenault, Jr., 62, of Farmington, Maine, and Nicholas Claudel, 29, of Belgrade, were working in the post office across the street from the accident and responded running to the truck, which was lying on its passenger side. They approached the windshield, where they could see the disoriented driver, Mark E. Tuttle, 54, inside the burning cab. They removed him from the truck through the broken windshield and guided him to safety. Flames, up to 50 feet high, issued from the truck and the cab was completely engulfed. Tuttle was not burned, but sustained injuries in the wreck. Arsenault and Claudel were not injured.

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