



# CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION

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## News release

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### **Fifteen Americans honored with Carnegie Medal for extraordinary acts of heroism**

PITTSBURGH, June 22, 2020 — The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission today announced 15 people 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. Those who died in their rescue attempts will be awarded the Medal posthumously. They include 27-year-old **Isiah Jamal Pierce** who re-entered his burning home to save his partner’s baby; **Marcos Gil**, 17, who drowned after pushing a girl out of a circular current; **Yolanda Robinson Isom**, who re-entered her burning home for her three sons still inside; and **Robert Todd Riddle**, who drowned after entering rough water in order to save a man who was floundering.

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 second announcement of 2020 recipients, a total of 10,168 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, \$41.8 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance.

The awardees are:

<b>Scott Ullom</b>	Dallas, W.Va.	<b>Justice Michael McBain</b>	Sturtevant, Wis.
<b>Zachary A. McDowell</b>	Prosperity, Pa.	<b>Scott Cooper</b>	Ocala, Fla.
<b>Isiah Jamal Pierce*</b>	Laurel, Miss.	<b>Jeffrey Garrett</b>	Elk Grove, Calif.
<b>Christopher Lanski</b>	Agawam, Mass.	<b>Robert Todd Riddle*</b>	Deer Park, Texas
<b>Marcos Gil*</b>	Arimo, Idaho	<b>Ross Dugan</b>	Fairhaven, Mass.
<b>Yolanda Robinson Isom*</b>	Rock Hill, S.C.	<b>Winston S. Douglas</b>	Hapeville, Ga.
<b>Grant A. Goffinet</b>	Jasper, Ind.	<b>Michael B. Dunn</b>	Waterford, Conn.
<b>Brent D. Duncan</b>	Jasper, Ind.		

\*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](http://carnegiehero.org). Follow us on Facebook: [facebook.com/carnegiehero](https://www.facebook.com/carnegiehero) and Twitter: [@carnegie\\_hero](https://twitter.com/carnegie_hero).

**Scott Ullom and Zachary A. McDowell**

First at the scene of a nighttime, interstate highway accident on Aug. 3, 2018, in Waynesburg, Pa., medics Scott Ullom and Zachary A. McDowell did not wait for protective equipment to rescue 24-year-old Eric J. Stroud, Jr., who was trapped in the driver's seat of a burning SUV. Unable to open the driver's door, Ullom, a 59-year-old paramedic of Dallas, W.Va., went to the rear of the SUV and entered through the rear hatch door, while 22-year-old emergency medical technician McDowell, of Prosperity, Pa., sprayed a fire extinguisher at flames burning near Stroud. From the cargo area, Ullom crawled to Stroud, who was tangled in his seat belt. Once Stroud was freed, Ullom dragged him to the back of the vehicle, where McDowell waited to assist. Together they pulled him from the SUV, which was shortly engulfed by fire. Stroud sustained severe head injuries and burns to his legs and hands.

**Isiah Jamal Pierce, *deceased***

Isiah Jamal Pierce and his partner were sleeping in their bedroom with her 1-year-old daughter, Mahogany R. Brownlow, when fire broke out in their Laurel, Miss., home during the night of Dec. 19, 2018. Waking, 27-year-old Pierce, a poultry plant worker, attempted to douse the flames with buckets of water, while his partner guided her three oldest children outside to safety. The fire grew and spread, and Pierce exited the home. Outside, Mahogany's mother and Pierce realized the baby was still inside. Pierce took a deep breath and ran back into the burning home as dense, black smoke filled an interior hallway. He did not return outside. Fire engulfed the home, and firefighters could not enter it until after the fire was extinguished. They eventually found the bodies of Mahogany and Pierce in the bedroom, where they had died of smoke inhalation.

**Christopher Lanski**

Without waiting for firefighters to arrive, Agawam (Mass.) Police Officer Christopher Lanski immediately went to a burning second-floor apartment where neighbors said a 56-year-old woman was trapped inside during the early morning hours of March 20, 2018. Lanski kicked the locked apartment door several times, breaking it open. He was overwhelmed by heavy smoke and retreated to the stairwell for air. He returned to the doorway and spotted the woman on the floor several feet away. Lanski went to his hands and knees and crawled under the smoke to her. He grasped her wrist and backed to the door, dragging her with him. There, another officer met him and together they dragged the woman down the stairs and outside to safety. The woman was taken to the hospital for treatment of smoke inhalation and burns. Lanski suffered smoke exposure, and he recovered.

**Marcos Gil, *deceased***

Despite being a poor swimmer, 17-year-old Marcos Gil on April 28, 2018, jumped into the Portneuf River near Lava Hot Springs, Idaho, where a 14-year-old girl, struggling and caught in a circular current downriver from a waterfall, called for help. Marcos, a student, of Arimo, Idaho, submerged in the same current and the girl said she felt him push her toward the bank. She clung to a branch and then swam to the river bank, but Marcos, still in the current, drowned. The girl called 911 and divers recovered Marcos from the river several hours later. The girl was not physically injured.

**Yolanda Robinson Isom, *deceased***

A 35-year-old nursing assistant re-entered her burning, Rock Hill, S.C., home Sept. 29, 2018, for three of her sons who were still inside. Yolanda Robinson Isom was sleeping inside the home with her husband and five sons when a fire broke out in the kitchen. Seeing flames on the outside of the home, a neighbor ran to the front door, located the two oldest sons near the entrance, and led them away from the house. Coughing, Robinson Isom exited the house and yelled for her kids. Leaving the two boys with the neighbor, Robinson Isom returned inside the house. Responding firefighters removed Robinson Isom, her three younger sons, and her husband from the home. Robinson Isom died at the scene. The boys and her husband were treated at a burn center; while the sons ultimately recovered, the husband died seven months later.

**Grant A. Goffinet and Brent D. Duncan**

Despite having no fire-rescue training, Jasper (Ind.) Police officers Grant A. Goffinet and Brent D. Duncan arrived at the scene of a Sept. 16, 2018, accident where the front passenger of an overturned and burning SUV remained in his seat, appearing disoriented to the officers. Goffinet and Duncan discharged fire extinguishers at flames in the car's engine compartment, but the fire continued to burn. Goffinet entered the SUV through the broken-out, rear hatch window. He entered to his waist, removed a headrest from a rear seat, and called to the man, 33, who moved toward him. Goffinet grasped his upper body and pulled him. By then, Duncan had joined Goffinet at the vehicle's rear and gained a hold on the man's arm. Together, they removed the man, and a bystander helped Goffinet and Duncan drag him away from the vehicle before flames spread and grew to consume it. The man was taken to a hospital for treatment of a facial abrasion; he was not burned.

**Justice Michael McBain**

Kelvin J. Yde, 20, was trapped inside his burning car after a June 19, 2019, accident on an interstate highway near Yorkville, Wis. Justice Michael McBain, 21, recreational vehicle technician of Sturtevant, Wis., stopped at the scene. He ran to Yde's vehicle which was burning along the passenger side. Forcing the driver's door open, McBain found Yde pinned against his seat by the steering wheel, beneath the collapsed windshield. McBain partially entered the sedan and pushed the damaged windshield off Yde. He then used a pocketknife to cut Yde's seat belt. Reaching around Yde's torso, McBain yanked Yde from behind the steering wheel and out of the car. Two other motorists helped McBain carry Yde to safety. Yde suffered multiple injuries, including broken bones, but he was not burned.

**Scott Cooper**

Scott Cooper, a sergeant at an Ocala, Fla., correctional facility, was fishing on Oct. 13, 2018, from a dock of a nearby jetty in the Gulf of Mexico in St. Pete Beach, Fla., when he heard shouting and saw a boy, about 5 years old, near the jetty, struggling to stay afloat in the water. Cooper climbed onto the dock's railing and then also spotted a girl, about 12, a few feet from the boy. Despite no easy way out of the water, which was murky, deep, and had a strong current, Cooper jumped into the water and submerged. After Cooper surfaced, the boy climbed onto him, submerging him several times. Cooper resurfaced again, and used each arm to hold onto one of the children, while moving a short distance to the dock. Others on the dock lifted the boy from the water. Unable to lift the girl up, Cooper moved her toward the large rocks that made up the jetty. He helped her climb up onto them, and others helped her to safety. Cooper pushed away from the rocks, and floating on his back and kicking, reached shallow water where he was able to wade ashore. Cooper ingested water and sustained lacerations to his hands and feet; he recovered.

**Jeffrey Garrett**

The sound of a car accident woke Jeffrey Garrett, 47, in the early morning hours of Oct. 21, 2018, at his home in Elk Grove, Calif. A couple and their adult son were inside a truck that left a roadway and struck a tree, fire breaking out in the truck's engine compartment. Following the sound of the son's coughs, Garrett climbed over a wall and went to aid the son, who directed him to help his parents. Garrett opened a rear door and leaned inside the truck, finding the woman injured and unresponsive. He released her seat belt and carried her out of the truck. Hearing the husband call out, Garrett opened the damaged driver's door and moved the man's leg away from direct contact with flames that had entered the passenger compartment. Garrett leaned inside to release the man's seat belt and then withdrew, pulling the man to his feet outside the truck. Garrett also aided the son, who had exited the truck, farther away to safety. Fire spread to engulf the truck's cab by the time police and firefighters arrived.

**Robert Todd Riddle, *deceased***

Robert Todd Riddle, a 56-year-old maintenance technician of Deer Park, Texas, on Sept. 4, 2019, was on a boardwalk adjacent to Trinity Bay in Kemah, Texas, when he saw an unidentified man floundering in the water and calling for help. Despite rough water on the bay, Riddle removed his outer apparel and dived into the bay, swimming toward the man, who had reached a buoy and clung to it. Meanwhile, boaters, alerted to the situation, piloted to the buoy and brought the man aboard their boat, unaware of Riddle, also in the water. Bystanders saw Riddle swimming back toward the boardwalk, but then he disappeared. Search efforts were initiated, but Riddle's body was not located until the following day. He had drowned.

**Ross Dugan**

Following a Feb. 6, 2019, multi-vehicle accident on a highway in West Bridgewater, Mass., the driver of a sedan, 45, and his three passengers, 27, 36, and 46, remained inside the car as fire broke out at the sedan's rear. Ross Dugan, 38, lineman of Fairhaven, Mass., responded to the scene. Unable to open the car's doors, he broke out the front passenger window. Extending his head and arms through the window opening, Dugan grasped the front passenger under his arms and pulled him free of the vehicle. The driver and one of the back seat passengers moved to the window and Dugan removed them one by one. Flames by then had entered the back seat area, and Dugan retreated for air. As another man discharged a fire extinguisher into the sedan's rear interior, Dugan yelled at the 46-year-old passenger in the back to come to the front window. The passenger moved to the front, passenger seat, and Dugan and the other man each grabbed an arm and pulled him from the vehicle. Flames quickly grew to engulf the interior of the vehicle. The 46-year-old passenger, who suffered severe burns, was transported to the hospital, as were the other passengers and driver. Dugan suffered burns to his hand and face, and also received hospital treatment. He recovered.

**Winston S. Douglas**

On Sept. 9, 2018, Terri L. Bradley, 63, was stabbed by a man armed with a kitchen knife while crossing the street in an Atlanta neighborhood. Winston S. Douglas, 52, of Hapeville, Ga., was driving a transit bus when he witnessed the attack and immediately stopped the bus. He called for the assailant to stop, but the man continued to attack Bradley. Douglas grabbed a 4-foot length of fence post from a nearby construction site and advanced to the assailant while swinging the post, striking the assailant at least once in the ribs. The assailant attempted to strike Douglas with the knife and then thrust the knife at Bradley again. The blade of the knife broke off, and the assailant fled as Douglas chased him. Another man working nearby tackled the assailant. Douglas joined the other man and the two struggled to subdue him. Douglas and the other man were ultimately able to restrain the assailant and hold him until police arrived. The assailant was arrested and charged with various offenses including aggravated assault. Bradley was hospitalized for several days for treatment of her stab wounds, and she recovered.

**Michael B. Dunn**

Lisa J. Margaritis, 49, was on an Aug. 2, 2019, paddleboard outing when she paddled beneath a bridge in a large, tidal pond in Southold, N.Y. She fell from the board into a swift current and the board caught on a bridge piling. Margaritis, still tethered to the board, was unable to free herself and floated face down in the water. Michael B. Dunn, 60, real estate investor from Waterford, Conn., was jogging nearby when someone told him that Margaritis was in trouble. Dunn responded and jumped into the water, but was immediately carried downstream in the strong current. Dunn swam into an adjacent upstream eddy current and was carried back to a point upstream of Margaritis. He swam to Margaritis and turned her over. Dunn held Margaritis's head above water as he tread water and struggled in the current. Shortly the tether broke, and the current carried them rapidly downstream. Dunn swam toward the bank with Margaritis. Once he could stand, Dunn dragged Margaritis, who was unconscious, from the water. She could not be revived. Dunn was tired and sustained a laceration to his foot; he recovered.

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