



CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION

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18 will receive Carnegie Medal for acts of extraordinary heroism; five posthumously

PITTSBURGH, June 23, 2021 — In its second announcement of 2021, the Carnegie Hero Fund is proud to recognize 18 civilians who risked their lives for others. Each will receive the Carnegie Medal, North America’s highest honor for civilian heroism.

Among those to be awarded this quarter are 50-year-old **Ryan Keith Cox**, who saw to the safety of a group of his co-workers before being shot and killed by a gunman who opened fire in the Virginia Beach city government building; **Steven T. Boesl**, a 49-year-old farmer, who died after he entered a Minnesota silo filled with noxious gas to attempt to save his brother and nephew; and Bronx student **Lucas Y. Silverio Mendoza**, 19, who was killed while attempting to guide a 3-year-old from a burning building. Those heroes along with **Christine L. Beheler**, a mom, 41, who died trying to save a 12-year-old boy from drowning and **Keawe Michael Pestana**, 34, who drowned attempting to save his three cousins who had entered a cold, swift-moving river after their canoe tipped over, will receive the Carnegie Medal posthumously.

The Carnegie Medal is given throughout the U.S. and Canada to those who enter extreme danger while saving or attempting to save the lives of others. With this announcement, a total of 10,238 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 117 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, nearly \$43 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance.

The awardees are:

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| Steven T. Boesl* | Brandon, Minnesota | Eric Andrew Staten | Heber City, Utah |
| Ryan D.A. Horne | International Falls, Minnesota | Mark Pierce | Sandy, Utah |
| David J. Brown | Shakopee, Minnesota | Nathan Hammond | Heber City, Utah |
| Jamey Ruth Klassen | Guelph, Ontario | Christine L. Beheler* | Niles, Ohio |
| Marc F. Romano | Kailua Kona, Hawaii | Mark A. Krempasky | Warren, Ohio |
| Scott D. Morrison | Rescue, California | Melinda J. Wilms | Salem, Ohio |
| Keawe Michael Pestana* | Donnelly, Idaho | Renata Bandel | Winnipeg, Manitoba |
| Antonio Morgan | St. Louis, Missouri | Ryan Keith Cox* | Virginia Beach, Virginia |
| Lucas Y. Silverio Mendoza* | Bronx, New York | D. Roderick Boothe | Mableton, Georgia |

*deceased

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).

Steven T. Boesl

Despite knowing the dangers of silos and the propensity for the buildup of suffocating gases inside them, **Steven T. Boesl**, a 49-year-old farmer of Brandon, Minnesota, immediately entered the top of a silo where his 47-year-old brother, Curtis F. Boesl, and 11-year-old nephew, Alex P. Boesl, had collapsed moments earlier on Dec. 21, 2019 in Brandon. Firefighters were arriving and waiting on breathing apparatuses, but Boesl urged everyone to hurry, quickly climbing the ladder 35 feet, dropping from a hatch in the silo's top about 7 feet to the top of compacted corn. A fire chief at the top of the opening saw Boesl collapse almost immediately. Minutes later, a fire captain wearing a breathing apparatus entered the silo and removed all three to safety, but they ultimately died.

Ryan D.A. Horne

After a May 14, 2019, accident in which her SUV left the road and crashed into woods in Birchdale, Minnesota, 74-year-old driver Janet F. Mart was trapped inside the car as it burned. Trees and brush blocked the car's front doors from opening, as flames on the outside of the car grew and spread. Driving nearby, 36-year-old sales manager **Ryan D.A. Horne**, of International Falls, Minnesota, spotted the flames. After trying to open the vehicle's driver-side doors, he opened the rear hatch and entered the vehicle, climbing into the cargo area and then the back seat. Mart extended her arm between the front seats to reach for Horne, who pulled her into the backseat and ultimately out of the vehicle. Flames grew to engulf the car, heat causing the tires to pop as Horne helped Mart away from the car.

David J. Brown

Two men, ages 34 and 35, started to struggle in a swimming area of the Gull River at a cabin resort in East Gull Lake, Minnesota, after they entered the 57-degree water May 26, 2019, to save another friend who was having difficulty returning to the bank due to a strong current. **David J. Brown**, a 41-year-old regional manager of Shakopee, Minnesota, responded to the scene, where he removed his shirt and shoes and swam to one man, whose head was barely above the surface of the water. Brown pulled the man to the bank where he collapsed, and Brown returned to the river for the second man, who was gasping for breath. Grabbing a nearby life ring and the man, Brown swam the man back to a dock, where others assisted. The friend was rescued by another person.

Jamey Ruth Klassen

Sixteen-year-old **Jamey Ruth Klassen** of Guelph, Ontario, entered Lake Huron July 26, 2020, after she overheard others on the bank near Collingwood, Ontario, making a 911 call about 40-year-old kayaker Christopher G. Robertson drowning. She swam 600 feet to the man's overturned kayak, but by the time she reached the area, the man was no longer at the water's surface. Diving 12 feet, she found the man at the bottom of the lake and brought him to the surface. As she held him with one arm, she swam to shore with the other, shouting for help. Eventually a man on a paddleboard responded and took the man to shore where they revived him.

Marc F. Romano

On a boat nearby, 26-year-old deckhand **Marc F. Romano**, of Kailua Kona, Hawaii, immediately jumped into the Pacific Ocean after hearing a swimmer screaming for help off the coast of Waikoloa, Hawaii, on Jan. 2. As Romano, swimming with a foam floaty, approached the woman, 68-year-old Jeri L. Douglas, he noticed a cloud of blood surrounding her. She shouted that she had been bitten by a shark. Romano instructed the woman to hold to one end of the floaty and towed her to a responding boat. At the beach, Romano and others carried the woman to arriving paramedics, who applied a tourniquet to stanch the bleeding from her leg. Douglas suffered bite wounds to her calf, a broken leg bone, and wounds to her ankle and toe, and continues to recover.

Scott D. Morrison

On Aug. 13, 2019, from inside his Rescue, California, home, Carnegie Hero **Scott D. Morrison** heard a sedan collide with a boulder and tree about a quarter-mile away. The vehicle came to rest upright but ignited dry grass around it; its 39-year-old driver, Raymond M. Jerrett III, remained unconscious inside with his legs trapped in its center console area. Blocked by fire from accessing the driver's door, Morrison, a 59-year-old retired diesel mechanic, ran to the front, passenger door, opened it, and entered the vehicle. Flames engulfed the driver's side and Jerrett's clothing was burning. Morrison pulled Jerrett partially out of the vehicle, then freed Jerrett's feet, and removed him fully. He patted out flames on Jerrett's clothing and dragged him farther from the car. Jerrett was airlifted to a burn center for treatment of severe burns. Morrison was also treated at an area hospital for smoke inhalation and second-degree burns. He recovered.

Keawe Michael Pestana

Three young children, ages 10, 6, and 3, were canoeing with their father April 26, 2019, in the Salmon River near Riggins, Idaho, when the canoe tipped and the children and their father entered the cold, swift-flowing water. From the bank nearby, the children's uncle as well as their cousin, **Keawe Michael Pestana**, a 34-year-old, Donnelly, Idaho, laborer, who was deaf and could not speak, entered the water and swam into the river on a course to intercept the children, but the current carried them downstream past them. The uncle, tiring, exited the river, but Pestana remained in the river. He was last seen in a circular current near the bank, before submerging and drowning. The current pushed the children and their father into a calm eddy about a half-mile downstream, and they exited the river, unharmed.

Antonio Morgan

A July 28, 2020, highway accident left 23-year-old motorist, Keilen Robinson, unresponsive inside his vehicle with the driver's side against the highway's center median in St. Louis County, Missouri. As nearby motorist **Antonio Morgan**, 34, a business operator of St. Louis, Missouri, responded, fire broke out under the hood and burned against the car's windshield. Morgan entered the vehicle through the front, passenger door, and kneeling on that seat, attempted to pull Robinson toward him. Smoke filled the car's interior and, as flames intensified, one bystander encouraged Morgan to abandon the rescue. After retreating for air, Morgan entered the vehicle again, released Robinson's seat belt, and tugged. A sudden explosive sound forced Morgan out of the car, but Robinson's upper body fell outside the passenger door, and Morgan returned to drag him to safety.

Lucas Y. Silverio Mendoza

After smoke filled his Bronx, New York, sixteen-story apartment building in the early hours of June 9, 2019, 19-year-old student **Lucas Y. Silverio Mendoza** and his family descended the building's stairs, he and his cousin assisting his grandmother, who had mobility issues. Around floor 14, the family passed 3-year-old Yasleen Moreno, who was crying and alone in the stairwell. Instructing his cousin to continue helping his grandmother down the stairs, Silverio Mendoza turned back, returned to the 14th floor landing and reached for Yasleen. Before he could get to her, flames and smoke exploded through a trash compactor chute door, buckling nearby walls, blowing open several nearby doors including the one to the stairwell and filling the area with flames and smoke. The explosion badly burned Silverio Mendoza and Yasleen, separating them, and blowing Silverio Mendoza down a full flight of stairs where he hit his head on a concrete wall. The cousin retrieved Silverio Mendoza and, along with others, helped him from the building. Yasleen was later found on the 12th floor by a firefighter, who carried her to safety. Both Silverio Mendoza and Yasleen died later due to their injuries sustained in the blast.

Eric Andrew Staten, Mark Pierce, and Nathan Hammond

A natural gas explosion on Feb. 15, 2019, decimated a Heber City, Utah, vacation home and trapped 37-year-old Lori R. Walker in the basement, critically injured, under a collapsed ceiling and furniture while flames broke out on the first floor, growing and spreading rapidly. Working together, neighbors **Eric Andrew Staten**, a 52-year-old firefighter of Heber City; **Mark Pierce**, a 50-year-old river guide of Sandy, Utah; and **Nathan Hammond**, 34, a general contractor of Heber City, responded to the burning home. Staten, who was off-duty, out of his fire department's jurisdiction, and using a fire axe he kept at home as a decoration as his only piece of safety equipment, searched the main floor of the house for Walker, but did not find her there. But hearing her call from below him, he exited, and met by Pierce and Hammond, they waded through deep snow to enter the structure's basement. Guided only by their cell phone flashlights they continued to search, as fiery debris fell into the basement and, at times, onto them. They found Walker, and working together, Staten and Hammond moved the debris enough for Pierce to drag Walker free. Staten placed Walker on his shoulder and carried her from the house, where the men then used a coat as a sling to drag Walker through the deep snow to arriving emergency responders, as the log home became fully engulfed with flames. Walker was burned on more than 30 percent of her body and sustained severe injuries from the impact of the explosion. She continues to recover.

Christine L. Beheler, Mark A. Krempasky, and Melinda J. Wilms

Three Carnegie heroes will be honored for a July 29, 2019, heroic water rescue in Mosquito Creek Lake near Cortland, Ohio. A 12-year-old boy was with five other children playing in the manmade reservoir when he chased a soccer ball into deeper water and struggled to stay afloat. **Christine L. Beheler**, 41, a stay-at-home mom of Niles, Ohio, who had brought the children to the lake that day, entered the water and swam about 150 feet to the boy, who was panicking. He submerged Beheler as 43-year-old police sergeant **Mark A. Krempasky**, of Warren, Ohio, and 49-year-old teacher **Melinda J. Wilms**, of Salem, Ohio, responded. Krempasky reached Beheler, who was unresponsive, towed her back into wadable water where others assisted in getting her to the beach. Wilms, who had a pool noodle, reached one end of it to the boy, who held on while she swam back to the beach towing him. Beheler could not be revived, and will receive the Carnegie Medal posthumously.

Renata Bandel

Two 17-year-old girls struggled in Lake Manitoba near Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, during a June 3, 2020, outing in which they left drifting inflatables in an attempt to swim back to shore. Carnegie Hero **Renata Bandel**, 52, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, was swimming with her niece about 150 feet from shore when others alerted her to one of the girls about 150 feet farther out. Bandel swam to her, instructed her to turn over onto her back, and tugged her by the back of the life vest toward shore, struggling against choppy waves. About halfway to shore, others swam from the beach to assist the girl to the beach. Although Bandel could not see the other girl, a bystander pointed out her vicinity, and Bandel swam out again, finding the other girl about 450 feet from shore. Towing her in the same manner, Bandel swam about 250 feet before a rescue boat arrived at the scene and assisted Bandel and the girl, who was ultimately treated at a local hospital for hypothermia, to shore.

Ryan Keith Cox

A disgruntled employee opened fire in a city government building in Virginia Beach, Virginia, on May 31, 2019, after killing two men outside. As the shooter moved throughout the offices shooting others, word spread that there was an active shooter in the building. A group of at least seven colleagues attempted to flee, but they were directed to change course when they encountered 50-year-old **Ryan Keith Cox**, an account clerk of Virginia Beach. Cox directed the group to quietly enter an office and barricade themselves inside. Cox refused his colleagues' pleas to enter the office with them and told one co-worker that he needed to see if anyone else needed help. Shortly, the assailant encountered Cox a few feet from the closed office door, fatally shooting him before shooting others in the building; the colleagues secured in the office were not injured. After a shootout with police, the assailant was shot dead. Cox was among 12 people who died and four people who were critically injured.

D. Roderick Boothe

In the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of St. Augustine Beach, Florida, Kelly A. Wood, 42, was with two young teens on May 23, 2020, when she was carried away from shore by a rip current. Carnegie Hero **D. Roderick Boothe**, a 50-year-old compliance director of Mableton, Georgia, entered the ocean to retrieve his 9-year-old son, who, once safely in wadable water told his father than he heard others shouting for help from farther out. Boothe swam 150 feet through rough waves to Wood, who submerged when he was about 10 feet away. He dived and pulled Wood to the surface. Boothe circled his arm around her chest and, towing her, struggled to return to shore. Once he was in wadable water, he picked Wood up and carried her to the beach, where others assisted. Wood was not breathing and bystanders began CPR on the beach, where she was revived. Boothe, nearly exhausted, struggled to catch his breath. Both Wood and Boothe recovered.

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