



CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION

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FOR RELEASE:
Dec. 20, 2021

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17 Americans to receive Carnegie Medal for acts of extraordinary heroism

In its final announcement of 2021, the Carnegie Hero Fund is proud to recognize 17 civilians who risked their lives for others. Each will receive the Carnegie Medal, North America’s highest honor for civilian heroism.

Among those awarded are five who lost their lives, and will receive the Carnegie Medal posthumously: **Gwendolyn Theus** a 64-year-old home health caretaker who chose to stay inside a burning house and attempt to assist her client to safety; and **Kristoff Jaleel Murray, 27, D’Angelo Cordero Jenkins, 34, Terrell Miller, Sr., 33, and Matthew Ryan Kihlstrand, 45,** who all died after entering rough water to rescue children and others in four separate incidents across the United States.

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 10,273 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 more than 117 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, more than \$43 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance.

The awardees are:

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|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Shane Morrison | Concord Twp., Ohio | D’Angelo Cordero Jenkins * | Rock Hill, South Carolina |
| Josef Gluck | Monsey, New York | Michael Byers | Charlotte, North Carolina |
| Randy Wilkinson, Jr. | Beaverton, Michigan | Corey A. Purinton | Winter Garden, Florida |
| Neil Andrew Garrett | Santee, California | Terrell Miller, Sr. * | Houma, Louisiana |
| Gwendolyn Theus * | Delhi, Louisiana | Jonathan Bauer | Berlin, Maryland |
| Kristoff Jaleel Murray * | Tampa, Florida | Matthew Ryan Kihlstrand * | Baroda, Michigan |
| Jason J. Hahn | Mason City, Iowa | Austin Michael Stahly | South Bend, Indiana |
| Kenneth Brian McCarter | Okatie, South Carolina | Cameron Meade | South Bend, Indiana |
| Sean P. Conaboy | Brooklyn, New York | | |

*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 and Twitter: [@carnegie_hero](https://twitter.com/carnegie_hero).

Shane Morrison

A 13-year-old boy was atop a rocky breakwater with friends on June 24, 2020, when he noticed a younger boy drifting into deeper water in Lake Erie off of Mentor, Ohio. After shouting at the boy and receiving no response, **Shane Morrison** of Concord Township, Ohio, jumped in and swam to 13-year-old Donovan Conwell. Donovan had already struggled to remain afloat for several minutes, and as Shane approached, he panicked and submerged Shane repeatedly as Shane kept him afloat in the water. Shane attempted to swim back toward the breakwater, but he made little progress due to a strong current pulling them farther into the lake. Donovan was in and out of consciousness, as Shane tread water. Authorities arrived in a boat, picked the boys up and took them to safety. Donovan, who ingested water, received treatment at a hospital; he recovered. Although nearly exhausted, Shane was not injured.

Josef Gluck

A 71-year-old man was mortally wounded after a man armed with a machete entered a home containing 70 people and swung it indiscriminately, slashing anyone near him. Those in the Monsey, New York home had lingered there after a Dec. 28, 2019, religious ceremony. **Josef Gluck**, 32, of Monsey, who managed the synagogue next door, fled the home with others and while many took shelter in the synagogue, Gluck reentered the home. Seeing the wounded man, who was recovering from recent heart surgery and had mobility issues, in the dining room, Gluck shouted for him to flee or hide, but the badly injured man couldn't move. As the assailant entered the dining room, Gluck shouted at him, intending to goad him into following him outside. When the assailant failed to follow, Gluck entered the house again and threw a small table at the assailant, striking him. The assailant chased Gluck outside, and Gluck ran toward the synagogue, warning those inside to lock the doors. The assailant fled the scene, Gluck following to record his license plate number. Police used that information to find and arrest the assailant two hours later. The 71-year-old man died from his injuries three months later. Four others who were injured recovered.

Randy Wilkinson, Jr.

Randy Wilkinson, Jr., was visiting a friend on Oct. 7, 2019, when he heard screaming from the nearby Old Brazos River near Freeport, Texas. An 11-year-old boy with a severely injured leg clung to the base of a pier more than 200 feet from the nearest river bank and was screaming for help. Wilkinson, a 31-year-old electrician of Lake Jackson, Texas, drove to the opposite bank, parked, and went to a dock, where he could pinpoint the boy's cries to the middle of the river. Removing his shoes, he jumped into the river and swam about 300 feet to the boy, who he directed to climb onto his back. Towing the boy, he returned to the dock, and a police officer helped lift the boy to safety.

Neil Andrew Garrett

An unconscious, 10-year-old girl was floating in the Pacific Ocean about 375 feet from shore off the coast of San Diego on May 14, 2020. The 62-degree water was turbulent with large and frequent waves and a strong rip current. **Neil Andrew Garrett**, a 39-year-old aviation electrician of Santee, entered the water and swam to the girl. Hugging her to him with one arm, he sidestroked back toward shore, but made little progress in the rough conditions. They were repeatedly struck and submerged by waves, and at one point,

Garrett lost his grip on the girl, but quickly recovered her. A surfer approached them, and they placed the girl on the surfboard, the surfer moving her to shore while Garrett swam behind them. The girl was revived on shore and taken to a hospital; Garrett was nearly exhausted after the rescue, but both of them recovered.

Gwendolyn Theus, deceased

A 64-year-old caregiver died trying to save her charge – a 71-year-old paraplegic woman – after a fire broke out in the woman’s Delhi, Louisiana, home on Nov. 23, 2020. **Gwendolyn Theus**, also of Delhi, became aware of the fire and entered the woman’s bedroom on the opposite side of the house to alert her. Choosing to stay inside the home as the flames intensified and spread, Theus attempted to push the woman’s hospital bed through the bedroom doorway, but, when it did not fit, she dragged the woman off the bed and pulled her toward a bedroom window, which she had partially opened. The woman slipped from Theus’ grasp and they both fell to the floor beneath the window. Firefighters responded and removed both women, who were by then unresponsive, through the bedroom window. The 71-year-old woman was revived and taken to a hospital. Theus could not be revived, and she died of smoke inhalation.

Kristoff Jaleel Murray, deceased

A 37-year-old man and his 3-year-old son were wading on a sandy shelf off an Apollo Beach, Florida, beach on June 11, when a strong tidal current carried them into the deep water of a channel that flowed toward Tampa Bay. Janosh Purackal called for help as he clung to his son while being carried to a point about 440 feet from the beach. **Kristoff Jaleel Murray**, 27, of Tampa, Florida, entered the water and swam toward Purackal and son Daniel. Murray swam at least 150 feet toward them, but was unable to reach them. At some point he was seen swimming back to the beach, but he submerged. Purackal and Daniel became separated as the current carried them farther from shore. Rescue authorities recovered them about a mile west of where they had last been seen. Murray’s body was found three days later on a beach about 1.5 miles west of the scene. Purackal, Daniel, and Murray drowned.

Jason J. Hahn

Jason J. Hahn, a 48-year-old business owner of Mason City, Iowa, stopped at the scene of an overturned pickup truck on April 5 off a rural Mason City road. The truck’s driver, 61-year-old Donna K. Rench, was suspended by her seat belt inside the truck that had come to rest on its passenger side. Smoke filled the cab making it impossible to see Rench. Hahn broke out the truck’s windshield with the help of another man. Flames by then had spread to the truck’s engine and entered the cab on its dashboard. After retrieving a knife, Hahn partially entered through the windshield and cut the seat belt, causing Rench to fall into the cab’s back seat. With the other man grasping Hahn’s belt, Hahn felt blindly around the back seat area until he found Rench, then held to her as the other man pulled Hahn and ultimately Rench to safety. Rench sustained fractures, lacerations, and contusions to her body, but she was not burned. Hahn, who had inhaled smoke, was treated at a hospital for an injured right shoulder and a laceration that required sutures. He recovered.

Kenneth Brian McCarter

A 73-year-old woman, Carol S. DeLillo, was tending her Okatie, South Carolina, backyard on the evening of July 3, 2020, near the bank of an 8-foot-deep pond when an alligator, weighing 275 pounds and measuring 10 feet long, emerged from the pond, bit down on her leg and dragged her into the water. Neighbor **Kenneth Brian McCarter**, a 44-year-old plant operations manager, was nearby when he saw her splashing in the water and calling for help. He entered the water and swam about 70 feet to DeLillo. He grabbed her around her waist and attempted to pull her up to the surface of the water, but he could not. They were then both pulled under the water. McCarter attempted again to pull her to the surface, yanking her free of the alligator's jaws. McCarter dragged and pushed DeLillo, who was heavily bleeding, back toward the bank where McCarter's teenaged son was waiting to assist them from the water. DeLillo underwent multiple surgeries but regained the ability to walk with a cane. McCarter was not injured.

Sean P. Conaboy

Kelli A. Daley, 54, was standing on a subway platform in New York City, on May 19, 2021, waiting for a train home when a 22-year-old man with a knife ambushed her from behind and repeatedly stabbed her, even after she fell to the ground. Another subway rider, 52-year-old cameraman **Sean P. Conaboy**, of Brooklyn, New York, shoved the assailant to the ground, briefly separating them as Conaboy also fell. The assailant returned to his attack on Daley. Conaboy regained his footing, wrapped his arm around the assailant's neck and pulled him off of Daley, as the assailant continued to attempt to stab Daley. Conaboy pinned the assailant to the floor. Police responded and arrested the assailant. Daley was taken to a hospital where she was treated for wounds to her neck, shoulder, and chest.

D'Angelo Cordero Jenkins, *deceased*, and Michael Byers

An Oct. 3, 2020, fishing outing in Huntersville, North Carolina, turned tragic after a 2-year-old boy entered the swift-flowing Catawba River. With the boy was his mother and her partner, 34-year-old cable installer **D'Angelo Cordero Jenkins**, of Rock Hill, South Carolina. Jenkins immediately jumped in, fully clothed, after the boy and reached him in the river, but then had difficulty swimming with the boy. Hearing the mother's calls for help, **Michael Byers**, a 65-year-old retired business operator of Lexington, North Carolina, entered the river fully clothed, and swam to Jenkins and the boy. He grasped the boy's arm and took him from Jenkins, towing him to the boat ramp where the boy safely exited the water. Byers was nearly exhausted and could not return to assist Jenkins, who was floating in the river. The boy was treated overnight at a hospital; Jenkins drowned.

Corey A. Purinton

In a Aug. 23, 2020, single-vehicle accident, a sedan left a Winter Garden, Florida, highway, struck a fence, rolled several times, and came to rest on its roof at an angle on a chain-link fence, with its back end about 4 feet above the ground. Nineteen-year-old **Corey A. Purinton**, a Homosassa, Florida, laborer, was working nearby and responded to the accident. Flames broke out at the front of the car, and its driver, 62-year-old Richard J. Broccolo was seriously injured and moved toward the back of the car. Seeing Broccolo's hand reach out through the broken-out rear windshield, Purinton partially entered the car

through the rear windshield and pulled Broccolo toward him. As he came free, they both tumbled to the ground and Purinton patted out flames that were on Broccolo's shorts, and dragged him away from the burning car. Broccolo sustained third-degree burns to his body as well as several broken bones and a head injury from the impact. Purinton inhaled smoke and suffered burns to his hands; he recovered.

Terrell Miller, Sr., *deceased*

Despite not knowing how to swim, **Terrell Miller, Sr.**, 33, a marine industrial tank cleaner, of Houma, Louisiana, entered the Gulf of Mexico near Grand Isle, Louisiana, on June 5, 2020, after three children, ages 8, 9, and 13, in his party were pulled away from shore into deeper water. The mother of two of the children entered the water as well and briefly grasped the youngest child, but they were separated. Miller reached the 13-year-old girl and towed her 25 feet back to shore before they became separated. Miller submerged. Other bystanders and first responders pulled Miller from the water, and then rescued the mother, and three children. The mother and the 13-year-old girl were treated by paramedics. The 8- and 9-year old boys could not be revived, and Miller died two days later of medical complications related to near-drowning.

Jonathan Bauer

A May 2 multi-vehicle accident on an Ocean City, Maryland, bridge spanning Assawoman Bay ejected a toddler from her family's pickup truck, causing her to land in the cold water of the bay. **Jonathan Bauer**, a 51-year-old IT executive of Berlin, Maryland, was involved in the accident, and after learning what had happened to the girl, 23 months, he climbed over the bridge's guide rail and jumped 30 feet into the shallow water. He swam to the girl, who was unresponsive. Holding her over his shoulder, he tapped her back until she coughed, spit up water, and opened her eyes. Bauer held her above the surface of the water until a pontoon boat arrived to take them to shore. The toddler was airlifted to the hospital and was released the following day. Bauer was sore, but he did not require medical treatment.

**Matthew Ryan Kihlstrand, *deceased*; Austin Michael Stahly,
and Cameron Meade**

A June 19, 2020, family fun day on St. Joseph River near Sodus, Michigan, turned deadly when an 8-year-old boy struggled to swim in swift current near where his boat was anchored. On the boat, 45-year-old sales rep **Matthew Ryan Kihlstrand**, of Baroda, Michigan, entered the water and swam after the boy, the current carrying them both downstream. Kihlstrand ultimately submerged and did not resurface. **Austin Michael Stahly**, a 30-year-old manager of South Bend, Indiana, and **Cameron Meade**, a 31-year-old courier of South Bend, were camping nearby and responded, entering the water and helping the boy safely exit the river. Water-rescue crews searched the scene that night and the following day for Kihlstrand, who was found about 1.5 miles downstream. He drowned.