



# CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION

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## 18 Americans to receive Carnegie Medal for acts of extraordinary heroism

In its first announcement of 2022, the Carnegie Hero Fund is proud to recognize 18 civilians who risked their lives to save others. Each will receive the Carnegie Medal, North America’s highest honor for civilian heroism.

Among those saved by this quarter’s awardees, were at least nine children ranging in age from 5 to 13 years old. Ten-year-old **Ricky Lee Sneve** died saving his 5-year-old sister from drowning in the Big Sioux River and Arizona teens **Zachary Johnson Haugen**, 16, and **Jake Vageli Watson**, 15, jumped from Sunset Cliffs in San Diego to save an 18-year-old woman and 11-year old girl from drowning after they were swept into a Pacific Ocean cove by a 5-foot wave.

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 10,291 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 118 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, nearly \$44 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance. The awardees are:

<b>Evan Daniel Townsley</b>	Los Angeles	<b>Marena L. Kouba</b>	St. Cloud, Minnesota
<b>Ricky Lee Sneve*</b>	Hudson, South Dakota	<b>Magdalini Chormova</b>	Athens, Greece
<b>Patrick J. Driscoll</b>	Centerville, Ohio	<b>Anthony Hogan</b>	Haslet, Texas
<b>Justin Leland Perry</b>	Interlochen, Michigan	<b>Daniel L. Cook</b>	Alexandria, Louisiana
<b>Jason Hadfield</b>	Kingsley, Michigan	<b>Brandon Melancon</b>	Church Point, Louisiana
<b>Peter Rosengren*</b>	Batavia, Illinois	<b>Layne Paul Gravois*</b>	Gray, Louisiana
<b>Arthur R. Caballero, Sr.*</b>	Fresno, California	<b>Kim A. McGrady*</b>	Dunwoody, Georgia
<b>Carl J. Robinette II*</b>	Hartsville, South Carolina	<b>Zachary Johnson Haugen</b>	Phoenix
<b>Christopher Lee Taylor</b>	Greenville, Ohio	<b>Jake Vageli Watson</b>	Scottsdale, Arizona

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

### **Evan Daniel Townsley**

As **Evan Daniel Townsley** drove through a Los Angeles neighborhood on July 23, he heard a woman screaming for help. The 66-year-old woman had been walking on a sidewalk when a 70-pound pit bull mix dog attacked her, biting her arms and torso, and lunging at her neck. Stopping at the scene, Townsley, 53, of Los Angeles, wrapped an arm around the dog and stabbed it with a small knife. The dog turned on Townsley, allowing the woman to flee to safety. Townsley and the dog continued fighting; the knife blade broke, and the dog bit Townsley's forearm and wrist. Townsley swept the dog off its feet and pinned it to the pavement, where others, with difficulty, secured the dog until three police officers arrived and removed the animal from the scene. The woman was treated for serious bites to her arms, abdomen, and back. Townsley underwent surgery and then spent eight weeks in rehabilitation for treatment of 18 deep puncture wounds to both his arms – some of which pierced bone – and a fracture to his wrist.

### **Ricky Lee Sneve, *deceased***

A 10-year-old boy drowned June 12 while saving his 5-year-old sister from the same fate in the Big Sioux River near Hudson, South Dakota. **Ricky Lee Sneve** of Hudson dove into the water after Chevelle Sneve stepped or fell into water that was 3 feet deep. He pushed Chevelle back toward the bank where she could exit the water to safety, but, in doing so, Ricky entered an area of the river where an undertow flowed into water 12 feet deep. Three boys and Ricky's stepfather entered the water to help Ricky, but two of the boys immediately struggled in the water and the stepfather and the oldest boy helped them back to the bank. By then Ricky had been carried about 50 feet from the bank, and he submerged. Sheriff's department divers recovered Ricky's body about 75 feet down river from the point where he was last seen, in about 12 feet of water. He had drowned.

### **Patrick J. Driscoll**

A 56-year-old pilot rushed to the scene of a plane that had, on Oct. 13, 2020, crash-landed on a New Carlisle, Ohio, grass runway, overturned, and caught fire. Couple Joyce A. Seymour, 72, and Timothy J. Seymour, 73, remained inside the cockpit as flames broke out in the engine area. After seeing the crash, **Patrick J. Driscoll**, of Centerville, Ohio, rushed to the cockpit's passenger side, crouched on the plane's wing, which contained a fuel tank, and released Seymour's seat belt, freeing her. He then helped her to a point a few feet away from the plane. Driscoll then ran to the wing at the pilot's side as the flames intensified and spread toward the cockpit. Driscoll again crouched on a wing, released Timothy's seat belt, and pulled Timothy, who was larger than him, from the plane as another man arrived with a fire extinguisher. The fire shortly spread to destroy the plane. Driscoll's head was singed, but he recovered.

### **Justin Leland Perry and Jason Hadfield**

A 5-year-old girl was on a floatie on July 25, 2020, in Lake Michigan near Honor, Michigan, when its tether slipped off of her mom's wrist and strong winds blew it away from shore. At a point several hundred feet from shore, the float flipped and tossed the girl into the water. A 33-year-old musician from Interlochen, Michigan, **Justin Leland Perry**, and **Jason Hadfield**, 42, creative director, of Kingsley, Michigan, were in separate parties on the beach and responded. Perry entered the water with a partially inflated child's life ring and swam to the girl, where he placed her on the life ring, held to her, and kicked toward shore. Hadfield entered the lake with a child's kayak and swam to Perry and the girl, whom they placed on the kayak. Holding to the kayak, the men swam her to shore.

### **Peter Rosengren, deceased**

Newspaper executive **Peter Rosengren**, 42, of Batavia, Illinois, drowned March 28, 2021, after helping to rescue a 9-year-old boy from drowning in rough water of the Gulf of Mexico off of Miramar Beach, Florida. The boy was carried away from shore into deep water. Rosengren swam to the boy, but they were separated by rough waves and Rosengren lost consciousness. Others, using safety equipment, ultimately rescued the boy and Rosengren, who was unresponsive. The boy recovered after being treated at a hospital for swallowing water. Attempts to revive Rosengren were unsuccessful, as he had drowned.

### **Arthur R. Caballero, Sr., deceased**

**Arthur R. Caballero, Sr.**, a 62-year-old painter of Fresno, California, was fishing June 9, 2020, in the Kings River near Sanger, California, when he saw a 7-year-old girl in another party struggling to stay afloat as she moved into deep water. The cold, swift-moving current prevented adults in her party, including her mother, from reaching her. Caballero entered the river fully clothed, went to the girl, and thrust her back toward the bank where others helped her from the water. The current pulled Caballero downstream, where he lost consciousness. Responding authorities located him an hour later and removed him from the river, but he had drowned.

### **Carl J. Robinette II, deceased**

A 13-year-old boy was on a boat outing when he and several others left the boat to wade on a nearby sandbar. The boat drifted away from the sandbar and the boy panicked, leaving the sandbar and swimming toward the boat on April 26, 2020. He struggled in water about 8 feet deep. On the boat, **Carl J. Robinette II**, a 48-year-old internet sales and marketing manager of Hartsville, South Carolina, saw the boy struggling, dove into the water, and swam to him. Robinette grasped the boy and held him so his head remained above water while moving toward the sandbar. Another man, who held a life vest in front of him, swam to the pair and helped the boy grasp the life vest and get back to the boat. By then, Robinette had submerged. Department of Natural Resources divers recovered Robinette's body the next day, near where he submerged, in about 8 feet of water. He had drowned.

### **Christopher Lee Taylor**

**Christopher Lee Taylor**, 36, forklift operator, of Greenville, Ohio, was driving through a local neighborhood on Oct. 31, 2020, when he saw flames on a nearby home's second floor. Taylor ran to a side door of the home and called out into the house. From inside, he heard David Miles, 30, moaning. Doubled-over to keep his head below the smoke, Taylor entered the home, making his way through thick smoke and intense heat to a stairway where he found Miles, then unconscious, near the top. Flames were spreading toward the stairs, as Taylor picked up Miles and carried him out of the house.

### **Marena L. Kouba**

On July 19, 2020, a man and two children struggled in deep water in Lake Superior near Marquette, Michigan. A member of her college swim team, **Marena L. Kouba**, 21, of St. Cloud, Minnesota, was nearby and entered the lake despite rough water. Kouba swam several hundred feet to 37-year-old Eric E. J. Benac, and instructed him to hold onto her. Kouba swam to the children, ages 10 and 11, who were nearby, and instructed them to do the same. With all three people holding to one arm, Kouba swam toward shore, but quickly tired as she struggled against the current. She shouted to others to bring rescue equipment, and others on shore swam about 100 feet to reach them, assisting Benac and the children to safety.

### **Magdalini Chormova**

A 48-year-old woman was shot four times March 5, 2020, after she attacked a man demanding money from her brother at gunpoint inside his Charlotte, North Carolina, restaurant. As the assailant faced restaurant owner Thomas Chormovas, 51, sister **Magdalini Chormova**, a non-profit organization executive of Athens, Greece, approached the gunman from behind and grasped his shoulders, which gave Chormovas an opportunity to move to the assailant where the three struggled. The assailant fired the gun several times, with four bullets striking Chormova. The siblings brought the assailant to the ground, gained control of the gun, and secured him until police arrived. Chormovas suffered broken ribs and recovered. Chormova was hospitalized for several weeks for her gunshot wounds and other extensive injuries.

### **Anthony Hogan**

A violent accident on Aug. 12, 2020, in Fort Worth, Texas, left driver Michael A. Loya, Jr., 40, semi-conscious, badly injured, and pinned in a burning work truck containing flammable items, including welding tanks. Off-duty police chief, **Anthony Hogan**, 48, of Haslet, Texas, witnessed the accident and responded, as flames issued from the truck's underside. Hogan partially entered the truck through the driver's window, grasped Loya underneath one arm and pulled his upper body through the window. As he continued to pull at Loya, he struggled to remove him further as Loya's legs were caught in the wreckage. Placing one foot on the door and pulling with all his might, Hogan freed Loya and removed him from the truck as flames engulfed the truck. Loya was not burned.

**Daniel L. Cook and Brandon Melancon**

A boom truck driver was trapped in the driver's seat, after a June 9, 2020, accident in Derry, Louisiana, that left the truck overturned and on fire. **Daniel L. Cook**, 48, field operations manager of Alexandria, Louisiana, and **Brandon Melancon**, 36, operations executive of Church Point, Louisiana, responded to the driver's window where they each extended an arm into the truck and pulled on the clothing of driver Justin A. Richmond, 28, but his lower body was pinned. Switching their grasp to Richmond's arms, they continued to pull on him as flames entered the truck's passenger compartment and burned Richmond. As Richmond's legs came free, Cook aided him to the ground, and then Cook and Melancon dragged him from the vehicle.

**Layne Paul Gravois, deceased, and Kim A. McGrady, deceased**

Alerted on the beach that children were in distress in the April 8 turbulent waters of the Gulf of Mexico off of Miramar Beach, Florida, college student **Layne Paul Gravois**, 21, of Gray, Louisiana, as well as several others, entered the water and swam toward people in distress in the water. As the water conditions worsened and those who had responded also struggled, a human chain was formed from shore to attempt to reach those in distress. Business consultant **Kim A. McGrady**, 55, of Dunwoody, Georgia, also entered the water. Separate from the chain, McGrady swam toward someone he had seen in distress. Buffeted by heavy waves, Gravois and McGrady were removed from the water by others and were among 11 people who needed medical attention on the beach. Gravois and McGrady drowned.

**Zachary Johnson Haugen and Jake Vageli Watson**

Two Arizona high school students entered turbulent water on July 3, 2020, to save 18-year-old Thanya Huerta and an 11-year-old girl, who were swept into the Pacific Ocean from a low-lying rocky cliff surrounding a cove off of San Diego. Five-foot waves crashing violently onto partially submerged boulders coupled with a rising tide created a churning effect inside the cove. Seeing the pair in distress, **Zachary Johnson Haugen**, 16, of Scottsdale, Arizona, a member of his high school swim team, jumped from a cliff into the water. He swam to the pair and grasping the girl and guiding Huerta, he swam toward a low-lying part in the cliff where they could exit the water. A large wave separated him from them and stranded him among the boulders. Haugen called to his friend, **Jake Vageli Watson**, 15, of Scottsdale, who entered the water and swam to them. Placing the girl on his back he helped Huerta to a ledge and pushed the girl on it. Exiting the water himself, he was unable to pull Huerta from the water, but he held onto her, keeping her head above the surface of the water until lifeguards arrived by boat. Watson then assisted his friend from the boulders and the lifeguards assisted them to safety.