



CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION

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For release: Dec. 19, 2022

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In its final announcement of 2022, the Carnegie Hero Fund is proud to recognize 16 civilians who risked their lives to save others, including a trio that rescued a man from a shark attack, a teen who died attempting to rescue a man from drowning, a retiree who rescued a man from falling down a cliff overlooking the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and a sheriff's department K-9 handler that rescued two children from a house fire.

Each of these 16 individuals will receive the Carnegie Medal, North America's highest honor for civilian heroism.

Among those saved by this quarter's awardees were seven children, a man who had fallen onto a train track charged with 600 volts of electricity, an 82-year-old struggling to swim after a sailboat he was aboard capsized, and a 39-year-old truck driver after her Freightliner submerged in an inlet in British Columbia, Canada.

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, the Carnegie Medal has been awarded to 10,340 individuals since the inception of the Pittsburgh-based Fund in 1904.

Each of the recipients or their survivors will receive a financial grant. Throughout the more than 118 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, over \$44 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance.

The awardees for December are:

Mikala Vish, Brighton, Michigan

Joseph Diener, Columbia, Missouri

Cody Hartman, Advance, Indiana

Dominic Viet, Columbia, Missouri

Aden Spencer Perry*, Sunrise, Florida

Lisa Maria Fox, Chemainus, British Columbia

Ralph Leo Joyce, Lark Harbour, Newfoundland

Chad Ammerman, Little Egg Harbor Township, New Jersey

Christopher B. Arias, Oakley, California

Anthony R. Perry, Chicago, Illinois

Paul W. Bandy, Folsom, California

Robert Z. Fortner, Waverly, Tennessee

Aimee Johns, Folsom, California

Mark Anthony Gonzales, San Antonio, Texas

Heath Braddock, Salinas, California

Darby Bicking, Coatesville, Pennsylvania

*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).

Mikala Vish

A 32-year-old preschool teacher was sleeping inside her Gregory, Michigan, apartment with her four children when flames broke out on Oct. 26, 2021. Waking to the sounds of the fire crackling, **Mikala Vish** removed her 11-month-old infant to a second-story deck outside her apartment's front door and then returned inside to retrieve 4-year-old Tyron H. Vish, 13-year-old Lillyanna M. Thompson, and 6-year-old Torin C. Vish, taking each child to the deck one by one. On her final entry, she entered Torin's bedroom which was in flames and searched for him. Finding him under the bed, she grasped him, and guided him toward the front door. By then flames had spread to an upstairs hallway. Vish stumbled down the stairs with Torin, falling multiple times. At one point, a ceiling panel fell onto her back. Getting up, she ran to the front door carrying Torin and then ushered all the children from the deck down an exterior stairway to the ground below. Torin and Vish suffered from smoke inhalation and serious burns. Vish had burns to 60 percent of her body. Both underwent skin graft surgeries. The other children were not injured.

Cody Hartman

A 29-year-old oil company line leader from Advance, Indiana, was driving in Whitestown, Indiana, on December 5, 2020, when he noticed flames issuing from a second-floor bedroom window. **Cody Hartman** stopped at the scene and approached the house, peering through the front-door window, and saw a man's silhouette inside. After pounding on the door several times, Hartman forced it open with his shoulder and stepped inside, amid smoke and intense heat, Hartman pulled his shirt over his mouth and nose and went about 15 feet farther through the hallway to where the 63-year-old man by then lay on the living room floor. He grasped the man and pulled him to his feet before leading him to the front door and outside to safety. Hartman returned once more to the house. Before receiving an evaluation by paramedics on scene, Hartman entered the home again through the garage door, kicked in a door to the kitchen, and called out for anyone remaining inside.

Aden Spencer Perry, deceased

Following an accident that caused his car to enter a retention pond, an 18-year-old man called out for help as he struggled in deep water in Sunrise, Florida, on April 19, 2022. Walking his dog nearby, **Aden Spencer Perry**, a high school student of Sunrise, witnessed the accident and called 911. He handed the phone to his mother before approaching the dimly lit pond. With his mother on the phone with dispatchers, he entered the pond. Shortly, the car, the man and Perry submerged. Responding police officers searched for Perry and the man before divers located and removed them from the water. Both Perry and the man had drowned, with Perry suffering a neck injury that contributed to his death.

Ralph Leo Joyce

On a clear and frigid day in Lark Harbour, Newfoundland, John K. Parsons, 68, and **Ralph Leo Joyce**, 72, former cleaner, of Lark Harbour, were walking along a trail that followed the edge of a cliff face overlooking the Gulf of St. Lawrence on February 7, 2019. Parts of the trail were wet, with ice extending from the edge of the trail to the lip of the cliff. Parsons approached the cliff to photograph a seal and slipped, falling onto his back, before sliding to about 3 feet from the edge. His foot hit a rock protruding through the ice, which caused his momentum to stop. Joyce instructed Parsons not to move while he searched for something sturdy for Parsons to grab onto so that Joyce could pull Parsons to safety. After about 10 minutes, Joyce returned with a 10-foot-long tree branch that he extended to Parsons. Joyce dragged Parsons nearly 10 feet up the sloping hill away from the cliffside. Parsons recovered from minor bruising and scratches.

Christopher B. Arias

On the morning of March 11, 2021, a vehicle driven by a man entered the Sacramento River outside Walnut Grove, California. Driving nearby, Christopher B. Arias, a 39-year-old low voltage technician, witnessed the car leave the road and come to rest nearly 75 feet from the river's bank. Without removing his clothing or boots, Arias entered the water. He swam to the vehicle, which had submerged, and found the man atop the roof of his vehicle. Arias instructed the man, who said he couldn't swim, to enter the water and float on his back, at which point Arias tried to tow the man to safety, but the river's current carried them downstream. The man turned over onto his stomach, and the two swam together toward the river's edge. The two reached wadable water about 200 feet from where Arias had first reached the man. Arias, walking backward, towed the man and laid him down. A nearby bystander brought a garbage bag to place beneath the man's head, and the two men waited with him until paramedics arrived.

Paul W. Bandy, Heath Braddock, and Aimee Johns

A 62-year-old man was swimming in a bay off the coast of the Pacific Ocean in Pacific Grove, California, on June 22, 2022, when a Great White shark at least 14.5 feet long bit him, lacerating his upper left arm, upper legs and lower torso. The man shouted for help while his wounds bled profusely. **Paul W. Bandy**, 42, an off-duty police officer of Folsom, California, and his wife, **Aimee Johns**, 49, a registered nurse of Folsom, were paddle boarding about 900 feet away from the man. They heard calls for help and paddled toward the scene. Meanwhile, **Heath Braddock**, a 43-year-old business owner of Elkhorn, California, on the beach, was alerted of the shark attack by nearby bystanders, paddled out to the scene atop two stackable surfboards, arriving after Bandy, but before Johns. Once all three people had arrived, Bandy and Braddock worked to move the man onto one of the surfboards Braddock had brought to the scene. Braddock then paddled toward shore with the man in tow, his hands grasping Braddock's ankle as Johns grasped the back of the board and helped propel the unit along by paddling with her feet. Bandy followed the trio via his paddle board and called 911 en route. The man was attended to by several bystanders on the beach that were also trained medical professionals until paramedics arrived and transported him to the hospital. Bandy, Johns, and Braddock were not injured during the rescue, and the man survived, but he remained in rehabilitation six months later.

Joseph Diener and Dominic Viet

An 18-year-old woman struggled to maintain a hold on the metal support post of a basketball goal after rapid-flowing water flooded a park in Columbia, Missouri, on June 25, 2021. A pair of 15-year-old high school students, **Joseph Diener** and **Dominic Viet**, were riding by on bicycles when they noticed the woman clinging to the post. Removing their shoes, the two boys descended a sloped grass embankment and entered the water. They waded a short distance before swimming nearly 50 feet to the woman, who then released her grip on the post, grasped one of Diener's shoulders and one of Viet's shoulders. The two teenagers then swam with the woman toward the embankment where they helped her to safety. Paramedics arrived and transported her to the hospital where she received evaluation. Neither of the teenagers was injured during the rescue.

Lisa Maria Fox

While house-sitting in Mill Bay, British Columbia, on January 26, 2022, **Lisa Maria Fox**, a 51-year-old self-employed worker, heard a crash outside that sent Kellee M. Brown's truck into the Saanich Inlet. Brown's truck began to submerge about 100 feet from shore. Brown exited the vehicle, but she struggled to swim in the cold water. Fox exited the house and descended a stairway and approached the water's edge. She saw the mostly-submerged truck in the water and noticed Brown had reached the surface of the water near the truck. Fox waded through the water until she reached a narrow beach directly across from Brown. Fully clothed, including fur boots, Fox entered the water again and reached chest-high depth. A short distance away from Brown, Fox swam to Brown and grasped her by the back of the shirt. She positioned Brown on her back and then shepherded her to wadable water, where Fox helped Brown stand amid the cold water and led her to shore. There, she wrapped Brown in towels to warm her before medical professionals took her to the hospital via ambulance. Brown received treatment for lacerations, contusions, and a jaw injury.

Chad Ammerman

A sailboat carrying John L. McKenna capsized in Little Egg Harbor on June 21, 2021. McKenna, unable to reenter the sailboat, floated in the harbor until he arrived near a bulkhead along a bank. Fatigued, McKenna called for help. **Chad Ammerman**, a 41-year-old corrections officer, heard McKenna's call for help and phoned 911. Fearful that a rescue boat might arrive too late, Ammerman procured an emptied, 29-pound plastic cooler, jumped into the water, and swam through rough currents with the help of directional instructions from bystanders. Once he reached McKenna, Ammerman instructed him to grab one handle of the cooler while Ammerman backstroked toward the bulkhead. A firefighter piloting a boat responded and delivered McKenna and Ammerman to the bulkhead, where paramedics evaluated McKenna's condition.

Anthony R. Perry

On June 5, 2022, a man came into contact with an energized railway charged with 600 volts of electricity. **Anthony R. Perry**, a 20-year-old store associate, was getting off a train on a nearby platform when he saw the man convulsing on the train track. He jumped down from the platform and onto the track and carefully approached the man while avoiding touching the rails. Positioning his right foot next to the energized rail, Perry grasped the man's forearm but was shocked and let go of the man's arm. Perry quickly tried again, but he was shocked again and released the man. Catching the man's arm, Perry successfully lifted the man up and off the rail and placed him between the platform barrier and the track. Once authorities arrived, power to the rail was turned off and the man was taken to the hospital for evaluation and treatment. Perry received shocks but was unharmed by the rescue.

Robert Z. Fortner

On May 2, 2022, two boys, 7 and 8, were inside their Clarksville, Tennessee home when a fire broke out in the kitchen on the same floor as their bedroom. **Robert Z. Fortner**, a 29-year-old K-9 handler of Waverly, Tennessee, was on patrol nearby when he heard a report of children possibly trapped inside a burning building. He went to the scene, noticed smoke rising from the home and approached the front door, kicked it in, but he was unable to enter due to smoke. Fortner went to the backyard, where the mother of the boys pointed to a bedroom window of the home. Fortner retrieved a ladder and used it to reach the window. He smashed the window open and cleared the frame of glass. He then went headfirst through the window, landing on the bedroom floor inside a play structure. He crawled through the opening in the play structure farther into the bedroom where heat was intense and visibility was poor. Fortner found the 7-year-old boy, crying, and he grasped him under the arm, crawled back through the play structure to the window and handed him to a sheriff's deputy. He crawled back through the structure where he found the 8-year-old, who was unconscious. Fortner grasped him by the arm and dragged him to the window where he handed the boy to the deputy before exiting the home. Both boys recovered after being taken to the hospital for evaluation and treatment. Fortner suffered smoke inhalation and carbon monoxide poisoning, but recovered.

Mark Anthony Gonzales

On August 22, 2021, in San Antonio, Texas, a 27-year-old police officer was chasing a 44-year-old man when the man tripped and fell. The officer struggled on the street with the man, who was wanted on a felony warrant. The man was attempting to strike the officer when **Mark Anthony Gonzales**, a 35-year-old gym employee of San Antonio, was driving nearby. He stopped at the scene and exited his vehicle, approaching the scuffle between the officer and the man. The officer moved the man onto his stomach while Gonzales pinned his legs to the pavement. As the man was being subdued by the officer, he reached for the officer's gun and attempted to pull it from its holster, prompting the officer to place his hand over the assailant's while Gonzales pried the assailant's fingers from the gun. With his gun secure, the officer handcuffed the man with Gonzales's assistance. The man was ultimately arrested.

Darby Bicking

While attending a youth horse-riding camp on August 18, 2020, in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, an 8-year-old girl was in a grassy area encircled by chairs when a 95-pound English Mastiff dog bit the 60-pound girl. The girl screamed out for help, which prompted **Darby Bicking**, a 15-year-old high school student from Coatesville who was in a nearby barn to step in front of the dog to separate it from the girl. The dog released its hold on the girl and shifted its attention to Bicking, 4-foot-11 and 110 pounds, biting her on the left arm. Bicking attempted to push the dog away with her right arm but the dog would not release her. She reached for a chair but the dog bit her left leg and dragged her to the ground. Bicking screamed for help and the center's director responded, grasping the dog by its collar and leading it to a stall inside the barn. Both the girl and Bicking were taken to the hospital for treatment, where they each received stitches for bite wounds.

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