



# imPULSE

*A Periodic Newsletter of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission* ISSUE 25 • MARCH 2011



## HEROIC TEACHER

**David H. Benke, Ph.D.**, a seventh-grade math teacher at Deer Creek Middle School, Littleton, Colo., was on bus duty just outside the school after classes on Feb. 23, 2010, when a gunman opened fire on a group of students. Benke rushed him and took him to the pavement, and for his actions he was awarded the Carnegie Medal in December. Further details of Benke's heroic act, and those of the other 20 newly named awardees, are on pages 6, 7, and 9. Photo by RayNgPhoto.com, Littleton.

## *2010 in review: 'Upward and onward' in Hero Fund's recognizing civilian heroes*

*By Sybil P. Veeder, Chair, Executive Committee  
Carnegie Hero Fund Commission*

*The whole world moves, and moves in the right direction—upward and onward.*

In a recent letter (see page 10), one of the Hero Fund's beneficiaries applied the above quote by Hero Fund founder Andrew Carnegie to the work of the Commission, notably as it has pertained to her situation in recent years. The quote, which appeared in one of Carnegie's books, *Round the World* (1879), also sums up the Hero Fund's efforts in 2010: While the year held no cataclysmic event in either the financial markets or our offices, it saw the steady, even execution of our charge: to recognize selfless heroism throughout the U.S. and Canada and to apply particular financial benefit as needed in the lives of the heroes and their surviving dependents.

In the year just passed we moved "upward and onward."

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*Michael V. Sharpe of Fort McMurray, Alta., is one of 85 awardees of the Carnegie Medal named in 2010—and one of only five Canadian awardees. He was cited for the daring rescue of a truck driver whose tractor-trailer overturned and caught fire in a highway accident, with the burning wreckage seen in a cell-phone photo that Sharpe took. Sharpe is employed as a heavy haul operator for Syncrude Canada, Ltd., who provided this photo as a courtesy. Further details on pages 7 and 8.*



### THE TRUTH, ABSOLUTELY

By Walter F. Rutkowski, Executive Director  
Carnegie Hero Fund Commission

Ouch.

That's the best way to describe our reaction to an email of a few weeks back from an award candidate whose case was refused consideration on the basis of our inability to obtain the facts needed to justify a favorable decision. "I understand that it is generally advantageous to have standards and guidelines," the nominee wrote, "but when the rules and regulations become more important than the charter or mission, something has gone amiss."

"I submit to you that you are no longer truly honoring the spirit or design of Mr. Carnegie's legacy."

The rescuer in this case was a man who entered his neighbor's burning house in the middle of the night and rescued an infant from an upstairs bedroom. Our more than a century of experience has taught us that the facts of a case must be verified, and in this instance we were less than successful in our dealings with the fire department and the family who was aided.

We recognize, of course, that this particular candidate has a vested interest in a favorable decision, but we nevertheless are alert to any hint that we are unfaithful to the wishes of Andrew Carnegie. Not a day goes by that we do not maintain scrutiny of our efforts to implement the founder's thinking in establishing the Hero Fund—even the Commission's Finance Committee appeals to "donor intent" when carrying out its role in the administration of this institution.

Carnegie followed the organization closely in its first 15 years, before his death in 1919, and, although changes have certainly taken place in our operating methodology, the high standards set by him are those to which we endeavor to adhere. The standards include satisfactory factual establishment of the heroic acts under consideration, both to maintain the integrity of the award and to protect those whose lives have been impacted by the trauma and tragedy inherent in most cases.

Indeed, "conclusive evidence" of the heroic act was the first in the list of awarding regulations written and adopted by the original Commission members in 1904. In a latter-day affirmation of that, our attorney told us, "Truth is an absolute defense." Were we inclined to needlepoint, you might see those quotes so displayed on the walls of our investigators' offices.

Meanwhile, the case of the above-referenced gentleman is not sealed shut, we told him. We'll take a further look should we get the data we need. Carnegie would want that to happen, too.

## 2010 in review: 'Upward and onward'

(continued from page 1)



*Dr. Veeder has been a member of the Commission since 1992 and has chaired its Executive Committee since 2002.*

The 85 Carnegie Medal awardees named in 2010—80 from the U.S. and five from Canada—hail from 27 states and five provinces, with Michigan having the highest number of awardees, 12, followed by New York at 10 and California at nine. The Canadians make up 5.9% of the year's total, compared with the historical figure of 7.8% of all 9,412 awardees. By gender, the eight female awardees are 9.4% of the total, compared with the historical 8.9%. By age, the heroes range from 13 to 75, with nine in their teens; 16 in their 20s; 21 in their 30s; 18 in their 40s; 14 in their 50s; six in their 60s; and one over 70.

The youngest awardee is a Flint, Mich., schoolboy, **Keith Sampson**, who pulled a pit bull away from its attack on a 3-year-old child and held it until the child was taken to safety. The oldest is **Edward Jay Fillingham** of Henderson, N.Y., who paddled an old canoe into Lake Ontario to rescue three young people whose paddleboat had dumped them into the choppy water 1,500 feet from shore. Despite suffering from Parkinson's disease, which compromised his swimming ability, the hero persevered, and all lives were spared.

Fourteen of the 2010 awardees—or 16.5%—died while saving or attempting to save others; the historical posthumous ratio is 20.8%. Three of them were women: A 48-year-old homemaker, **Christine Rose Nguyen**, of New Brighton, Minn., who died after saving her daughter from a gunman's assault; **Tina Maryann Moores**, 35, a nurse from Grand Falls-Windsor, N.L., who helped to save a child from drowning; and **Eula Lee Harward**, 62, who, despite a history of coronary artery disease, repeatedly penetrated a smoke-filled house in Ocala, Fla., to rescue her sister-in-law. Both women succumbed. The Hero Fund assumed a degree of funeral cost reimbursement in five death cases.

Three of the rescue acts were performed by teams of related heroes. Brothers **Lawrence Francis**, 59, and **John Francis Kelly**, 65, joined forces to pull a fishing buddy from a frozen lake in Hazleton, Pa.; brothers **John**, 44, and **Joel P. Rechlitz**, 29, of Milwaukee, Wis., rescued a small boy from an overturned and burning car; and **Keith B. Havens**, 54, an aquatic director and swim coach from Albion, Mich., fought rough surf with his college-age sons, **Zachary** and **Zane**, to rescue a couple from drowning at a coral reef just off the beach in Hawaii, where the family was vacationing.

The year's awarded cases fell into traditional categories, with 30 of them being water-related, including six ice rescues. Burning-building rescues numbered 19, and burning-vehicle rescues, 14. Other categories were assault, 11; animal attack and moving vehicle, four each; and falling, three. "Burning" hardly describes the threats faced by San Diego County, Calif., Sheriff Deputies **Scott Matthew Bligh** and **Gary A. Kneeshaw**, who flew a patrol helicopter into the dense smoke of a wildfire to pluck two trapped climbers from the face of a mountain: The terrain was too rugged for anything but a "toe-in" landing and the craft too small to accommodate all four parties. Kneeshaw remained behind with one of the victims to await a second rescue sortie by Bligh, who was blinded by smoke in the open cockpit on his re-approach.

Giving to the beneficiaries—awardees disabled by their heroic acts or the financial dependents of posthumous awardees—totaled \$304,717 in 2010. By the end of the year, grants were being given to 71 individuals/families, and the funds are appreciated. One of the beneficiaries, the widow of a hero who had been disabled by his act, recently wrote, "I can't begin to tell you how much (the grant) has helped me from month to month....God bless you and your staff, who have touched so many lives with your generosity."

Another area of giving in 2010 was scholarships: \$126,289 was given to 27 students, including at least two each in medical, law, and veterinary schools, and a few working toward teaching degrees. Candidates eligible for aid of the type are all pre-retirement awardees and the children and financial dependents of the posthumous awardees.

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## 2010 in review: 'Upward and onward'

(continued from page 2)

The grave marker program had another year of acceptance, with families of 63 deceased awardees making a request for a marker during the year. Placement of the markers received regular coverage in *imPULSE*, one in particular getting special attention. On the 106th anniversary of the rescue act of the first Carnegie Medal awardee, **Louis A. Baumann** of Wilkinsburg, the extended family of Mr. Baumann gathered at Homewood Cemetery to place a marker on his grave.

Other outreach activities centered largely on medal presentations, with a twist in 2010 as recommended by one of the awardees. Rather than mail the award, he suggested, local heroes could make a personal presentation of the medal to newly named heroes living nearby. The idea had wings, with about a dozen heroes volunteering their services, and several such presentations were made during the year. Doug Chambers, who coordinates the effort, also represented the Commission at a Chicago school presentation as a part of a character education program, and over Memorial Day he participated in an annual seaside ceremony in Depoe Bay, Ore., initiated in 1945 to honor two awardees lost in a sea rescue nine years earlier.



*Three teams of related rescuers were awarded Carnegie Medals in 2010, including Keith B. Havens, left, of Albion, Mich., and his sons Zane, center, and Zachary. The trio saved a couple from rough surf at a coral reef off a Hawaiian beach. Photo courtesy of Bobby Lee of Albion, Mich., College, where Keith is swimming and diving coach and his sons members of the swim team. Further details on page 6.*

Dealings with the European hero funds included word from the Swiss fund, Carnegie Rescuers Foundation of Berne, which is observing its centennial in 2011. Hans-Ruedi Hübscher, executive director of that fund, has informed that the organization's annual "National Rescuer's Day" is on May 23. Other important dates this year include the biennial presentation of the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy in New York City in October, as sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, which is also celebrating its centennial in 2011.

A standard of service to which all members of the Commission aspire was set by the two "giants" we lost in consecutive months last year: Bob Off, who died Sept. 3, and Arthur Scully, who died Oct. 28. Both were long-time members of the Commission whose service firmly established and guided the work of the Hero Fund. They gave freely of themselves for a greater good, much as those whom we seek to honor appropriately. ☒



### FELLOW HEROES

Stanley C. Romberg, right, of Ocala, Fla., was presented his Carnegie Medal by fellow awardee Roger J. Blair of Largo, Fla., at an informal ceremony in Romberg's home on Feb. 6. In attendance were Romberg's parents, both 97, and his children, who traveled from Iowa. Romberg's award, announced Sept. 23, was given to recognize his actions of March 19, 2009, by which he saved a convenience-store clerk from armed assault. One of the assailants shot Romberg in the arm as they fled the store, but the clerk was uninjured. "I just wish I'd been about 30 years younger," Romberg, 70, said. "They never would have gotten out of there." Blair was also recognized for intervening in an assault, in 1995, when he was living in California. He said his goal was to convey to Romberg the significance of the award "and the magnitude of the act for which it was given."

### TO THE HERO FUND

#### GAME CHANGERS

Allow me to thank you folks for the time and effort that you put in to determining actual events where something truly heroic occurs. I was not aware of all the wonderful work you folks do until becoming involved through the award process for one of our local residents, Allen Lee Heck. The articles in *imPULSE* are very well done and inspiring.

Thanks for caring about people who do extraordinary things in life, regardless of what may befall them. They are the game changers.

*Mark Nelson, Cowlitz County Sheriff, Kelso, Wash.*

*Heck, 20, of Longview, Wash., died July 17, 2009, helping to save a 9-year-old girl from drowning in the Cowlitz River at Kelso. He was posthumously awarded the Carnegie Medal in September.*

#### TRAGEDY AVERTED

I am truly honored by your acknowledgement of my rescue and even more overwhelmed by the monetary grant and the Carnegie Medal. I have enjoyed reading stories from the book you sent as well.

My family and friends were proud of me for saving that child from drowning, and it feels good to know that I have made a difference in her life and that her family

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#### HEROES' MEMORIAL GIFT

A gift of \$1,000 was made to the Friends of Westchester Public Library, Chesterton, Ind., by the family of posthumous Carnegie Medal awardees **Mark John Thanos** and his father, **John Mikel Thanos**, both of whom drowned on Sept. 14, 2008, while attempting to

save a neighbor boy from a flooded culvert near their homes in Chesterton. Presenting the check to Claire



Williams, left, the library's circulation manager, is Michael Thanos, Mark's son; his brother John is at right. Also pictured is Mark's mother, Sophie Thanos Misner. Mark was a 48-year-old high school teacher at the time of his death and was a frequent user of the library, often borrowing materials for use in his classes. His father, 74, was a retired custodian. The Hero Fund cited the men in September 2009, and a part of their awards' accompanying financial grant funded the gift to the library for use in purchasing audio-visual materials. Michael, 17, is a high school student, and John, 20, is a second-year student at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind., studying secondary English education. He is a 2010 recipient of a Hero Fund scholarship. Photo taken by Mike Acsbok, the library's information technician.



## TO THE HERO FUND

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was protected from the possibility of a tragedy.

Thank you for recognizing me in this way. With two children in college, the money has been reinvested in them.

**Scott Hecht, Hauppauge, N.Y.**

Hecht was awarded the medal in September for saving a teenage girl from drowning in the Atlantic Ocean at Mastic Beach, N.Y., on July 30, 2009. He refers to the Hero Fund's centennial book, *A Century of Heroes*, which is available by contacting [carnegiehero@carnegiehero.org](mailto:carnegiehero@carnegiehero.org).

### WHAT WOULD I DO?

I recently requested the book *A Century of Heroes*, and it arrived in my mail today. Wow! Thanks so much for this very nice book, and thanks to Mr. Chambers for signing it for me! Can't wait to start reading and learning about more these wonderful people. All the stories make me wonder about myself—just what would I do in such a situation? Thank you again.

**Denise Pierce, Red Bay, Ala.**

The Commission's centennial book is available by contacting its author, Douglas R. Chambers, at [doug@carnegiehero.org](mailto:doug@carnegiehero.org).

### THANKS

Thank you for recognizing upstanders.

**Mark Hanis, President, Genocide Intervention Network  
Washington, D.C.**

### MERELY DUTY

I am writing this letter on behalf of my grandfather, Baxter S. Pynn, whom you have granted the Carnegie Medal award to in support of his actions. Your recent publications have given my grandfather much time to reminisce about the day that he saved the life of John Prentice. I would like to give my greatest thanks to you for recognizing his efforts as such a heroic event. My grandfather is 81 now and is still able to recall the day that he rescued Mr. Prentice as if it had happened yesterday. He recalls that it was the power of the Lord that gave him the strength to pull the helpless body out of the waves that day. My grandfather feels that rescuing Mr. Prentice was merely his duty and he has never expected to receive such recognition. His story is well known within our family, and the awards displayed at his household make for great conversation. We are all very proud to have a Carnegie Hero in our family.

**Victoria R. Pynn, St. Anthony, N.L.**

Pynn was assistant lightkeeper at the St. Anthony, N.L., lighthouse on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean when on Sept. 10, 1969, he rescued an 18-year-old college student who had been knocked into the surf by a wave, one of his legs broken. Pynn took a 16-foot boat through turbulent water to reach the young man, who, unconscious, was swept 1,200 feet from shore. After 25 minutes of the boat rolling and pitching, Pynn returned him to safety.

### LOSS FOR WORDS

I have been so overwhelmed with the honor and recognition that you have given me that I have been at a loss for  
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## Knowing right and wrong at young age, pupils reflect on the making of heroes

By Perry M. Smith, Ph.D.  
Maj. Gen. (ret.), U.S. Air Force

I recently had a wonderfully uplifting experience at Stevens Creek Elementary School in Columbia County, Ga. I had been invited to teach the entire fifth grade, about 150 pupils. The topics were leadership, service to others, and courage. I stressed that there are extraordinary individuals who can serve as role models for us all.

To kick the session off, a portion of a video on Augusta, Ga., hero Jimmie Dyess was shown. This was followed by stories of heroism on the part of both civilians and members of the military.



*Dr. Smith*

In describing the Carnegie Medal, I explained that it was the highest award for civilian valor. I then told the true story of an 11-year-old boy who volunteered to go down 18 feet into an abandoned cesspool. A baby had fallen through a small concrete opening. The opening was so small that no adult could fit through it.

After getting permission from his mother, the boy squeezed through the tiny opening and descended, upside down, until he reached the crying baby. Firemen who had tied the boy's feet with a rope then pulled the boy and the baby up. Just as the boy reached the opening, he dropped the slippery baby, who fell back into the muck. The boy said that he had to try again. Back he went with a sling in his hand so he would not drop the baby during the second rescue effort. This attempt was successful, and the crowd cheered as the boy and the terrified baby emerged. For this act of courage, this boy became one of the youngest recipients of the Carnegie Medal.

After telling that story, I asked, "Would you have done what that boy did that day?" More than half of the audience held up their hands. When asked why, the answers were fascinating. One said that it was the right thing to do. Another said that it would make her feel good. Another said we should always try to help people.

My talk was short so there would be plenty of time for questions. About 50 were asked. This past week, pupils were queried on their reactions to the session. Here are three:

- \* "I know now without a doubt that heroes can be all sizes, colors, ages and backgrounds, and that makes me hopeful for my chance to be someone's hero."

### CIVILIAN, MILITARY HERO LIVED LIFE OF SERVICE

**A. James Dyess** is the only person to be awarded both the Carnegie Medal and the Medal of Honor, America's two highest awards for heroism, one civilian and the other for valor in combat. A symposium designed in part to honor his life and example was inaugurated on Jan. 11—his 102nd birthday—in Augusta, Ga., his hometown.

"There's a pattern to his life we can all learn from," said son-in-law Perry M. Smith of Augusta. "A pattern of selfless service, courage, and concern for others that was truly extraordinary." The symposium gave its first Distinguished American Award to U.S. Army Col. Jack Jacobs, himself a Medal of Honor recipient as well as holder of three Bronze Stars, two Silver Stars, and two Purple Hearts. "Service and sacrifice are what made this country great and will keep this country alive," Jacobs said.



*Lt. Col. A. James Dyess, with wife Connor*

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## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENTS



Carnegie Medal awardee **Michael J. Gerndt, Sr.**, of Elkhart, Ind., was recently named the 2010 winner of a lifetime achievement and education award given by South Bend, Ind., Regional Airport's department of public safety. As captain and training coordinator for the department, Gerndt trains police officers, firefighters, and emergency technicians—"every kid's dream job," he says. In 1993, he was cited by the Hero Fund for his actions in behalf of two women who were drowning in Lake Michigan at New Buffalo, Mich. Then 41, Gerndt swam against a strong current to rescue one of the women, and he searched for the other until near exhaustion set in. Before Gerndt received his Carnegie Medal, he suffered a stroke, and with the award's accompanying grant he bought a computer to help him regain his reading skills. The Hero Fund "supplied me with the catalyst that accelerated my recovery," he wrote at the time. Gerndt is shown at the airport in a photo by Marcus Marter that was supplied through the courtesy of the *South Bend Tribune* and is used with permission.

## Knowing right and wrong at young age

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- \* "Heroes aren't always grand people, they're not always destined for heroism, they're not always strong but I do think they all have something special."
- \* "Heroes can be as close as a friend or a family member, but they can also be a passing stranger. This made me think about how I should take the time to look for heroism in those people I care about and learn from them so that I might one day see the chance to be a hero to someone that I may not even know."

Powerful lessons can be drawn from this session. Children at a young age learn the difference between right and wrong. They also understand how important it is to look out for others, especially those in trouble. If all of us who are parents, grandparents, and uncles and aunts can emphasize and reinforce these principles with children, our community and our nation will be well served. ☒

(Reprinted with permission from the *Augusta Chronicle*, Jan. 9, 2011. Smith is the son-in-law of A. James Dyess, the only awardee of both the Carnegie Medal and the Medal of Honor.)

## CIVILIAN, MILITARY HERO

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Dyess—"Jimmie"—was born in Augusta in 1909 and at age 20 was awarded the Carnegie Medal for his actions of a July 13, 1928, by which he helped to save a woman from drowning in the Atlantic Ocean at Sullivan's Island, S.C. "He was a tall, strong young man with flaming red hair," Smith said. "Big Red," as his friends called him, had just finished his first year at Clemson University, where he was an offensive and defensive end on the undefeated freshman football team.

"By age 19, Dyess had displayed two of the three most important qualities of a great leader, courage and compassion," Smith said. Sixteen years later, as a combat Marine, Dyess went behind enemy lines to save four badly wounded Marines on the Japanese island of Roi-Namur in the Marshall Islands in the Central Pacific. The next day, Feb. 2, 1944, he was shot in the head and killed while leading his men against the last enemy position. "He was only 35," Smith said, "but what a life he lived." Smith, a retired U.S. Air Force major general who is secretary of the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation, is married to Dyess's daughter, Connor.

Dyess's extraordinary contributions have been recognized in Augusta and Kansas City, Mo., and on Roi Namur. In Augusta, the Jimmie Dyess Parkway was opened in 1998. In 2003, the Augusta Museum of History completed a permanent exhibit, which highlights Dyess's heroism as well as two ships, the USS *Dyess* that served the Navy from 1945 until 1981, and the USS *Augusta*. The Marine Reserve Center near Kansas City was named in his honor, as was the airfield on Roi-Namur.

LOGIC BEHIND KINDNESS?  
NPR ASKS HERO FUND

*I heard about your organization on NPR's Radiolab and was quite intrigued by the wonderful work your organization does.—Philip Weingrow, Oakland, Calif.*

*I recently downloaded a podcast of the Radiolab episode entitled, "The Good Show." I cannot accurately put into words how astounded I was by Walter Rutkowski's retelling of three unbelievable feats of heroism. Thank you so much for your efforts to recognize the best we as a people have to offer; too often these stories are lost in the void of reported minutia, crimes, and tragedies.—Richard Pileggi, West Chester, Pa.*

The writers were responding to a segment on *Radiolab*, a National Public Radio show aired in December. The segment explored a question that haunted Charles Darwin: "If natural selection boils down to survival of the fittest, how do you explain why one creature might stick its neck out for another?"

*Radiolab* elaborated: "In exploring the topic, the standard view of evolution is that living things are shaped by cold-hearted competition. And there is no doubt that today's plants and animals carry the genetic legacy of ancestors who fought fiercely to survive and reproduce. But in this hour, we wonder whether there might also be a logic behind sharing, niceness, kindness ... or even, self-sacrifice. Is altruism an aberration, or just an elaborate guise for sneaky self-interest? Do we really live in a selfish, dog-eat-dog world? Or has evolution carved out a hidden code that rewards genuine cooperation?"

"Is there such a thing as a purely selfless deed—one with no hidden motives whatsoever?"

To help answer those questions, the show turned to the Hero Fund, whose executive director, Walter Rutkowski, fielded questions from the hosts and supplied details of three acts of heroism recognized by the Commission. Those heroes were also interviewed: **Lora K. Shrake** of Mattoon, Ill., who rescued a woman from an attacking bull; **William David Pennell** of Monongahela, Pa., who rescued three occupants of a burning car; and **Wesley James Autrey** of New York, N.Y., who saved a man from being struck by a subway train.

The show can be heard on:  
[www.radiolab.org/people/walter-rutkowski/](http://www.radiolab.org/people/walter-rutkowski/)

## TO THE HERO FUND

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*words. I want to thank you for the beautiful medal and the grant. I have put the money up so that I could apply it to further my education, and the medal sits on my father's and mother's mantel for everyone to see.*

*I never thought of myself of deserving such a precious, and such an honorable, gift as you have given me. I still can't believe it. It goes without saying what an honor it is that you have recognized me as a hero.*

*Nicholas J. Edwards, Salem, Ore.*

*Edwards was awarded the medal in June for pulling a woman from her overturned and burning car after an accident at night.*



LATEST AWARDEES  
OF THE CARNEGIE MEDAL

SINCE THE LAST ISSUE OF *imPULSE*, THE FOLLOWING 21 INDIVIDUALS HAVE BEEN AWARDED THE CARNEGIE MEDAL, BRINGING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF RECIPIENTS TO 9,412 SINCE THE HERO FUND'S INCEPTION IN 1904. THE LATEST AWARDS, WHICH WERE ANNOUNCED ON DEC. 22, ARE DETAILED ON THE COMMISSION'S WEBSITE AT WWW.CARNEGIEHERO.ORG. THE NEXT ANNOUNCEMENT OF AWARDEES WILL BE MADE ON APRIL 7.

**Keith B. Havens**, 54, an aquatic director and swim coach, and his sons **Zachary Prince**, 20, and **Zane W.**, 18, both college students, of Albion, Mich., saved Brittany and Jason Sorensen from drowning in the Pacific Ocean at Kilauea, Hawaii, on June 29, 2008. Brittany and her husband Jason were snorkeling at a coral reef just off the beach when they became caught in a very strong current that carried them seaward through a channel in the reef. They shouted for help. On vacation, Havens and his sons became aware of the situation from the beach. They swam 300 feet out to Brittany, Zachary and Zane then continuing 100 feet farther to Jason. Unable to escape the current because of the channel configuration along with converging waves, Keith swam directly against it, Brittany holding to him, and they reached safety. Zachary and Zane, meanwhile, grasped Jason and started to swim against the current toward shore. Taking a rescue tube, Havens joined them. He had Jason hold to the tube as he again swam against the current to shore, accompanied by Zachary and Zane. Progress was arduous, Havens at one point swimming under water and pulling himself along the coral outcroppings. All exited the water to safety.

**Mark J. Pierce**, 47, a disabled electrician from Morristown, Tenn., attempted to rescue his neighbor, Betty J. Rathbone, 70, from her burning apartment on Dec. 15, 2009. Rathbone was in her living room after fire broke out there. Despite dense smoke and flames that virtually filled the room, Pierce entered the apartment through its front door and called out to Rathbone but received no reply. He proceeded across the living room and through a hallway to her bedroom but was overcome by smoke and collapsed to the floor. Firefighters fought the flames to make entry to the unit and then located Rathbone and Pierce. Pierce, who sustained severe smoke inhalation and burns up to third degree, required two weeks' hospitalization. Rathbone died at the scene.

**Donald Ericson** rescued his neighbor, Elizabeth G. Shoaf, 85, from her burning house in The Woodlands, Texas, on June 5, 2009. Ericson, 51, a technology manager, was alerted to the fire from his house next door. He went to the rear of the burning structure, pried open a door, and stepped inside to find blistering heat, dense smoke that limited visibility, and flames rolling across the ceiling. Calling to Shoaf, Ericson followed



*Julie Fitzpatrick of Lighthouse Point, Fla., and her husband Larry teamed up to stop an unoccupied runaway boat just off the Atlantic coast at Pompano Beach, Fla. While her husband piloted their 15-foot boat alongside the runaway, Fitzpatrick jumped aboard and took it to a stop before it could strike other boaters in the area. Pictured also is the Fitzpatricks' son, Glenn. Photo by Sarah Dussault is used with permission of the South Florida Sun Sentinel.*



*When Joseph M. Healey of Bullhead City, Ariz., saw a boat drifting toward two children playing in the water of Lake Havasu just off the beach, he jumped into the path of the boat to get them out of the way. Severe injury to his lower right leg when struck by the boat resulted in amputation. Photo by Bill McMillen of The Daily News, Bullhead City, Ariz., and used with permission.*

her voice to her bedroom and found her on the floor. He retraced his path to the living room, dragging her, and took her outside and away from the house before collapsing. Both he and Shoaf required hospitalization for smoke inhalation, Ericson being detained three days.

**Trevor Jordan Tally** of La Grande, Ore., died June 18, 2009, attempting to save Jonah A. and Ann M. Johnson from drowning in Hells Canyon Reservoir at Hells

Canyon Park, Idaho. After Jonah, 6, fell from a dock into the reservoir, his grandmother, Johnson, 64, jumped in after him. Jonah struggled against her, submerging her. Others responding included Tally, 21, a service technician, who was fishing from a dock 150 feet away. Without removing any of his attire, Tally entered the cold, deep water from the farther dock and swam to Johnson. He grasped her but submerged with her before releasing his hold. Johnson and Jonah were returned to the nearer dock by others. Tally drowned, his body recovered from the reservoir the following day.

**Julie Fitzpatrick** helped to save an indeterminate number of people from being struck by a boat in the Atlantic Ocean at Pompano Beach, Fla., on Aug. 23, 2009. Unmanned, a 23-foot boat continued to travel along the coast after its occupants jumped overboard. Its course took it into an area frequented by divers and other boaters. In a 15-foot boat in the vicinity, Fitzpatrick, 37, a consultant from Lighthouse Point, Fla., and her husband followed the runaway boat, intending to warn anyone who might have been in its path. As they closed in on the runaway, which was traveling at undiminished speed, Fitzpatrick's husband took their boat alongside it, and Fitzpatrick then jumped aboard. She stopped the craft and returned it to shore. (See photo.)

**Gheorghita Rusu**, 21, of Ottawa, Ont., helped to rescue Brenda L. Van Leyen from an armed assailant in Nepean, Ont., on Nov. 6, 2009. A man approached Van Leyen, 46, while she was on her mail route and began to stab her repeatedly. Inside a nearby pharmacy, where he was assistant manager, Rusu heard her screaming. He exited the building, saw the assault, and grasped the assailant

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## LATEST AWARDEES

(continued from page 6)

from behind and then pushed him against a wall of the building. The assailant stabbed Rusu in his chest. Concluding that he could not restrain the assailant alone, Rusu returned inside the building for help. The assailant shortly left the scene. Van Leyen and Rusu required hospital treatment for their wounds. (See photo.)

Teacher **David A. Benke** of Littleton, Colo., saved an indeterminate number of people from assault by a gunman at the school where he taught in Littleton on Feb. 23 last year. A man armed with a hunting rifle approached the school and fired at a group of students, one of whom was injured by fragments. On bus duty about 60 feet away, Benke, 57, heard the shot. He then saw the assailant and ran to him as the assailant managed to get off another shot, striking another student. Benke grasped the assailant and took him to the pavement. Others responding immediately secured the rifle and helped to restrain the assailant, and police arrived shortly and arrested him. The injured students required hospital treatment, and they recovered.

**Michael V. Sharpe**, a heavy haul operator from Spruce Grove, Alta, saved Marc W. Bissonnette, 40, from a burning tractor-trailer after a highway accident in Wandering River, Alta., on Sept. 29, 2009. Bissonnette's rig, which included two trailers carrying 9,200 gallons of aviation fuel, left the highway and came to rest on its driver's side. Bissonnette was trapped in the tractor as flames broke out between it and the first trailer. Traveling nearby, Sharpe, 35, witnessed the accident. Despite intense and growing flames, he climbed atop the tractor and opened its passenger door, allowing Bissonnette to climb out. The men descended to the ground and retreated to safety as flames grew to destroy the tractor and first trailer, consuming its fuel. Sharpe sustained a third-degree burn to one arm that required hospital treatment.

**Larry G. Darrohn, Jr.**, 46, of Jim Thorpe, Pa., died attempting to save his neighbor, Sharon A. Joseph, 63, from her burning apartment on Dec. 11, 2009. Joseph was in her apartment, which was on the second floor of a two-story house, after fire broke out in the kitchen at night. Darrohn, who lived in the first-floor apartment, was alerted to the fire by Joseph's daughter, who escaped the flames. Directing the daughter to call for help, Darrohn ran up the interior stairway to the burning apartment. Firefighters arrived shortly and found Joseph and Darrohn unresponsive on the second floor. They were removed from the house but could not be revived, as they had died of smoke inhalation.

**Steven Bradley Estes** helped to save Dewell W. Brown from his burning house in Somerville, Ala., on Oct. 4, 2009. Brown, 44, was in a bedroom at one end of his mobile home after fire broke out at night in the kitchen, at the other end. Estes, 40, a manufacturing supervisor from Hartselle, Ala., was working as a volunteer reserve police officer and was nearby with



*Gheorghita—“George”—Rusu of Ottawa, Ont., was at work in the pharmacy for which he was assistant manager when he intervened in a knife attack on a letter carrier for Canada Post. Just six years in Canada from Romania, Rusu engaged the assailant, who stabbed him in the chest. Both Rusu and the victim required hospital treatment for their wounds. Photo by Julie Oliver of the Ottawa Citizen and reprinted by permission.*

another officer when they discovered the fire. Estes opened the structure's unlocked front door and stepped inside. Despite dense smoke filling that room, he crossed it, tracing Brown's voice to his bedroom. There, Estes lifted Brown from his bed and carried him toward the front door, but he collapsed to the floor before reaching it. The other officer dragged Brown outside to safety, Estes following.

**Gerald Piacente** of Red Hook, N.Y., helped to rescue Caitlin Kelly, 16, from a burning pickup truck after an accident in Milan, N.Y., on June 19, 2009. Caitlin was in a pickup truck that left the roadway and overturned onto its passenger side on the bank of a ditch. Piacente, 60, teacher, who lived nearby, responded to the scene after being alerted to the accident. As flames issuing from the front of the truck spread to its interior, Piacente maneuvered head first through the passenger window up into the wreckage, to his waist, and unfastened Caitlin's safety belt. He then pulled Caitlin from the vehicle and to safety with the aid of his son. Flames grew to engulf the truck. Caitlin required hospitalization for treatment for her injuries, which included burns.

**José Higareda**, a landscaper from Norwalk, Conn., died attempting to save Ivan D. Carpio, 10, from drowning in West Deering Pond in Norwalk on May 25, 2009. Ivan was wading along the bank of the river-fed pond when he lost his footing and was taken farther out and pulled downstream by a strong current. His father and a friend, Higareda, 20, who were fishing from the bank, entered the pond and swam to him. In water over their heads, the men submerged and resurfaced repeatedly as they pushed on Ivan. Higareda submerged a final time and did not resurface. Firefighters recovered Ivan from the pond, his father also reaching safety. They then found Higareda and returned him to the bank. He had drowned.

**Eula Lee Harward** died after attempting to rescue her sister-in-law, Margaret G. Harward, 78, from a burning house in Ocala, Fla., on March 9, 2009. Margaret was

alone in her one-story house after fire broke out in the kitchen and filled the residence with dense smoke. Arriving to visit, Eula, 62, also of Ocala, and two other relatives discovered the fire. They alerted a neighbor, who began to search the house for Margaret. Although she had a history of coronary artery disease, Eula immediately followed him inside, but the smoke forced them to retreat. They made repeated attempts, Eula at one point going 30 feet inside to find Margaret on the kitchen floor at the point of the fire's origin. After leaving the house to get help from the neighbor, Eula collapsed and could not be revived. Margaret died at the scene.

Police officer **Christopher Alan Sturgeon**, 33, of Topeka, Kan., helped to rescue a woman from her burning house in Topeka on Nov. 17, 2009. Josephine E. Brown, 63, was on the first floor of her house after fire broke out on that floor and filled it with dense smoke. Sturgeon responded and, after hearing Brown scream, kicked in the back door to the house since flames were blocking its front entrance. Despite dense smoke inside, he made repeated rescue attempts, finding Brown on the dining room floor. He dragged her to the kitchen on one attempt and then closer to the back door on a subsequent one. After again retreating for air, Sturgeon with another officer removed Brown to safety. Both Sturgeon and Brown required hospital treatment.

**Victor Oxford**, 54, of Corona, Calif., helped to save a woman from falling from a highway overpass in Corona on Jan. 2, 2009. In an apparent suicide attempt, a 38-year-old woman mounted the concrete parapet of a freeway overpass and held to the outside of a chain-link fence. Oxford, a minister and stock trader, was in traffic nearby and saw her. He too mounted the structure and, with only six inches of footing atop it, held to the fence as he proceeded 85 feet to the woman. Then 40 feet above the level of the freeway, he pinned the woman to the fence as she struggled against him. One man joined

(continued on page 9)



### HEROIC TEACHER ADDRESSES STUDENT ASSEMBLIES

On Sept. 15, 2008, **Christopher Adam Skeet** helped to save a Chicago-area school student from drowning in the Des Plaines River, a heroic act for which he was awarded the Carnegie Medal. In January, he had the opportunity to tell of his rescue to two assemblies of hundreds of Chicago public school students, many of whom were the same age as the boy who was rescued.

At the time of his heroic act, Skeet was a teacher at a therapeutic school in Des Plaines, Ill. He was alerted that the student had fled the school, and in searching for him, Skeet, 30, found him atop a concrete wall adjacent to the river, which was swollen from Hurricane Ike's heavy rains. As Skeet and others approached, the boy jumped into the flooded river. Without hesitation, Skeet jumped in, fully clothed, and swam after him. The struggling boy impeded Skeet's first attempt to take him to safety, and both were pulled downstream by the swift current before reaching the wall. Others aided them from the water.

Skeet's accounting of the rescue held every student's rapt attention, with one teacher remarking that she had never experienced a group of middle-school students that large ever being so quiet. The assemblies (top photo, taken at Scammon Elementary School) were a joint effort of the Hero Fund with the Heartwood Institute, a Pittsburgh-based provider of character education programs. Also participating was the Commission's director of external affairs, Douglas R. Chambers. In the bottom photo, Skeet is shown with Manda M. Lukic, assistant principal at Scammon.



## Bronze, silver, and gold medals given to Alberta man for fiery truck rescue

It was a spectacular rescue act, worthy of the bronze, silver, and gold medals that were bestowed on the hero. But when **Michael V. Sharpe**, now of Fort McMurray, Alta., risked his life to save the driver from an overturned and burning tank truck that had been carrying a load of jet fuel, he had no idea of the international accolades he would receive.



*Michael V. Sharpe with Princess Alexandra of the Royal Humane Society, London*

Sharpe, 37, was first awarded a silver medal for bravery from the Royal Canadian Humane Association in recognition of his heroic actions of Sept. 29, 2009. On that fateful day, he and a coworker were returning from work when they witnessed the truck—a tractor pulling two tandem trailers carrying a combined load of 9,200 gallons of the fuel—swerve to miss an oncoming vehicle. The rig, carrying also more than 200 gallons of diesel fuel, left the highway, skidded about 600 feet, and came to rest on its side, aflame, in a grassy area just off the road shoulder. The accident took place near Wandering River, about 100 miles north of Edmonton, Alberta's capital.

Not seeing anyone leave the truck, Sharpe leapt into action. "I was right there at that second. I knew if I didn't do something right then, I wouldn't be able to help him," he said. Sharpe, a heavy haul operator for Syncrude Canada, Ltd., found the driver trapped in the cab as flames 10 to 15 feet high issued from the area between the tractor and the first trailer. The 6,000 gallons of jet fuel in the first trailer were burning.

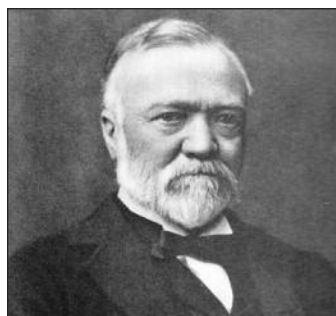
When Sharpe and his coworker were unable to kick out the truck's windshield to gain access to the driver, who was screaming for help, the coworker ran for a tool. Sharpe climbed atop the tractor and with difficulty worked to open the exposed passenger door, having to move aside parts of the wreckage. The driver emerged through the opening and with Sharpe dropped to the ground and ran to safety. The driver had only minor injuries, but Sharpe sustained burns of up to third degree to an arm and hand. He was taken to the hospital for treatment.

Shortly after receiving the Canadian association's medal, Sharpe was informed that he was chosen to receive the Stanhope Gold Medal, which is presented annually by the Royal Humane Society, London, to a recipient of a humane association award from either Australasia, New Zealand, New South Wales, Canada, or the U.K. The president of the Royal Humane Society, Princess Alexandra, cousin to Queen Elizabeth II, presented the Stanhope Medal to him at a ceremony in Haberdasher's Hall, London, last May. All of Sharpe's travel expenses were assumed by the Canadian association.

Sharpe's award trifecta was completed in December, when he was awarded the Carnegie Medal.

Awards were not on Sharpe's mind at the time of the rescue, nor was he thinking of the risk to his own life. "For me, it was about the person behind the risk," he said. "I had to help him. At first I didn't feel threatened by the flames but later realized the gravity of the situation. I drew a 50-50 card and came up lucky." ❧ — *Melissa A. McLaughlin, Case Investigator*

### ❧ THE QUOTABLE A.C. ❧



*Temperance and thrift are virtues which act and react upon each other, strengthening both, and are seldom found apart.*

—From *Problems of To-day*, 1908



## FRIENDS REMEMBERED

Blanche R. Coleman, 85, of Greenville, S.C., died Dec. 31. She was the widow of **William T. Coleman**, who was awarded the Carnegie Medal for his actions of March 23, 1960, by which he became disabled while saving a coworker from being killed by a falling beam at a construction site in Lattimore, N.C. When Coleman, a pipe fitter, then 42, saw the one-ton beam fall toward his coworker, he lunged at the man and drove him back, but the beam struck Coleman, inflicting extensive injury. Coleman, who died in 1977, and his wife were beneficiaries of a monthly grant from the Hero Fund.

**Richard G. McLeod**, 83, of Seattle, Wash., died Jan. 16. McLeod received the Carnegie Medal in 1960 for helping to save a man from drowning in the Pacific Ocean off a pier on Shemya Island in the Aleutians, Alaska. The man had fallen into the rough sea as a cargo ship was being unloaded, and the ship's movement threatened to crush him against the solid pier. McLeod, 31, who was a seaman, entered the 42-degree water from the ship and looped a rope around the victim, allowing him to be lifted back onto the pier. McLeod was then lifted to the pier, too cold to stand. Both men recovered.

**David L. Morris**, 87, of Hampton, Va., died Dec. 21. He received the medal for his heroic actions of July 3, 1954, when at age 31 he attempted to save a man from drowning in Hampton Creek, Hampton, Va. The man was injured while operating a motorboat in a race and was thrown partially overboard. As the boat circled out of control, Morris swam from shore into the path of the boat, locked his hands around its bow, and stopped its circular movement. He then boarded the boat, stopped the motor, and pulled the victim back into his seat. Morris's daughter Debbie Bullard of Hampton informed that he was very proud of his medal and lived a long life as a worthy recipient.



## GREAT-GREAT-APPRECIATION

The 181 victims of the Jan. 25, 1904, Harwick, Pa., coal-mine explosion were memorialized at a service held near the disaster's 107th anniversary. Placing a wreath at a memorial marker not far from the site of the mine is Emilio Saldari, who is joined by, from left, Ed Yankovich, vice president of District 2 of the United Mine Workers of America, and district judges Carolyn Bengel and David Sosovicka. Victims of the disaster, which remains one of the worst in American coal mining, included two men, Selwyn M. Taylor and Daniel A. Lyle, who entered the stricken mine in rescue attempts and lost their lives in its lethal conditions. Word of their heroic actions reached Andrew Carnegie, who, after donating \$40,000 in relief funds to victims' survivors, established the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission to honor acts of

civilian heroism in all walks of life throughout the United States and Canada. Within the next decade, he established similar hero funds in 10 Western European countries.

Only one of the Harwick miners, Adolph Gunia, 16, above left, survived the disaster, thanks to his rescuers, who took him to the surface "more dead than alive," according to a contemporary account. Gunia's descendants include his great-great-granddaughter, Harper Taylor Abbs, right, who was born Nov. 20 to Brandon R. Abbs and his wife Lena W. Steinhorn of Boston, Mass. Harper's parents said her middle name was given in honor of Selwyn Taylor "and his heroic acts as the lead rescuer" of Gunia, who was Brandon's great-grandfather. Harper's photo is courtesy of the family, and the top photo, taken by Steven Dietz, is courtesy of the *Valley News Dispatch*, Tarentum, Pa., and is used with permission.



## LATEST AWARDEES

(continued from page 7)

Oxford on the parapet, and another cut an opening in the fence opposite the woman. She was passed through it to safety, Oxford and the other man following.

**Brian W. Coblentz**, a 47-year-old landscaper from Germantown, Tenn., saved Heather M. Wolff, 2, from drowning after she broke through thin ice on a lake in Germantown on Jan. 31 last year. Heather went down an embankment on her sled and continued onto the ice of the lake, stopping about 50 feet from the bank. She stepped onto the ice but then broke through it into water about six feet deep. Driving nearby, Coblentz witnessed the accident. He parked and ran into the lake, breaking a path through the thin ice with his arms and body. Reaching Heather, he positioned her over his shoulder. Swimming and wading, Coblentz made his way back to the bank and turned Heather over to arriving emergency medical personnel.

**Joseph M. Healey**, 38, a cardiac monitor technician from Bullhead City, Ariz., acted to save two children from being struck by a boat in Lake Havasu at Lake Havasu City, Ariz., on July 17, 2009. The children, ages 6 and 4, were playing in the lake, just behind a boat that extended partially onto the beach. A larger boat that had been beached nearby began to drift backward toward them, its engines running. Healey shouted to that boat's operator to warn him. As the boat closed in on the children, Healey jumped into the water to get them out of its way. The boat struck Healey, badly injuring his right leg, before its operator took control of it. The children escaped to safety. Healey required hospitalization, during which the lower part of his injured leg was amputated. (See photo, page 6.)

**Scott Matthew Bligh**, 43, and **Gary A. Kneeshaw**, 36, deputies for San Diego County, Calif., Sheriff's Dept., saved two climbers, Megan A. Rippey and André D. Dorian, both 27, from an approaching wildfire on El Cajon Mountain, Lakeside, Calif., last Aug. 21. Rippey and Dorian were climbing a steep, rugged, face of the mountain when a wildfire broke out near its base and began to move up the slope toward them. Trapped, they called for help on a cellular telephone, allowing authorities to pinpoint their location. Bligh, who piloted a law enforcement patrol helicopter, and Kneeshaw, a tactical flight officer, flew a helicopter to the scene and located the climbers. Despite dense smoke, which restricted visibility, fire-driven turbulence, and the steep face of the slope, Bligh braced the front end of the helicopter's skids against the mountain. Kneeshaw then left the cockpit, forfeiting his seat for the climbers. Rippey entered the helicopter and was flown to safety by Bligh as Kneeshaw remained at the scene with Dorian. In Bligh's absence, those men fled advancing flames by moving laterally on the mountain. Returning shortly, Bligh again maneuvered against the mountainside as embers entered the cockpit and smoke caused his eyes to tear. Dorian took the passenger seat of the craft while Kneeshaw stood on a skid and leaned inside, Dorian securing him by his belt. Bligh then flew away from the mountain to safety.



## TO THE HERO FUND:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for my spring 2011 Carnegie Hero Fund Commission scholarship. As the recipient of a scholarship granted me in memory of my husband, I feel a great responsibility to show my honor and gratitude by doing my very best.

Several weeks ago, while attending a reception for students maintaining a 4.0 grade-point average, the provost stated that we were there not only as a result of our commitment to education but, moreover, because of the sacrifices each of our families had made to get us there.

With his words, I immediately thought about the ultimate sacrifice my husband, **Kenneth W. Ringeisen**, made on May 20, 2007, when he died attempting to save his friend from drowning. It was through his courage and selfless heroism, along with the generous support from the Commission that had me there that evening to receive the college's certificate of academic excellence and educational achievement.

That Ken was recognized for his last heroic act and honored with such dignity, has and continues to bring me comfort. I found this quote of Andrew Carnegie from the March 2009 issue of *imPULSE* to be so descriptive of the work performed by the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission: *The whole world moves, and moves in the right direction—upward and onward.*

Because of your work, those whose losses are great gain so much from the recognition given them with the Carnegie Medal, and with that, the world moves upward and onward.

Thank you for all you have done - I will be forever grateful.

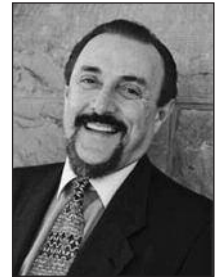
*Jan K. Ringeisen, Virginia Beach, Va.*



## Are heroes born, or can they be made?

By Johan Lehrer  
*The Wall Street Journal*

Can modern science help us to create heroes? That's the lofty question behind the Heroic Imagination Project, a new nonprofit started by Phil Zimbardo, a psychologist at Stanford University. The goal of the project is simple: to put decades of experimental research to use in training the next generation of exemplary Americans, churning out good guys with the same efficiency that gangs and terrorist groups produce bad guys.



*Dr. Zimbardo*

At first glance, this seems like a slightly absurd endeavor. Heroism, after all, isn't supposed to be a teachable trait. We assume that people like Gandhi or Rosa Parks or the 9/11 hero Todd Beamer have some intangible quality that the rest of us lack. When we get scared and selfish, these brave souls find a way to act, to speak out, to help others in need. That's why they're heroes.

Mr. Zimbardo rejects this view. "We've been saddled for too long with this mystical view of heroism," he says. "We assume heroes are demigods. But they're not. A hero is just an ordinary person who does something extraordinary. I believe we can use science to teach people how to do that."

The curriculum, which lasts four weeks and is targeted at adolescents, is rooted in decades of psychological research. (Mr. Zimbardo is best known as the scientist behind the Stanford Prison experiment, which demonstrated that even liberal-minded undergrads can be turned into sadistic prison guards.) After taking a "hero pledge"—research shows that public commitments boost rates of adherence—the "heroes in training" begin their education.

The first lessons focus on human frailties, those hard-wired flaws that allow evil to flourish. The students are taught, for instance, about the research of the psychologist Stanley Milgram, whose famous experiment in the early 1960s showed that ordinary people would blindly obey authority and give what they thought were strong electrical shocks to strangers. They are also warned about the bystander effect—our reluctance to help a person in need when others are around—and the prevalence of prejudice. It's a crash course in all the different tendencies that lead good people astray.

After being "fortified against the dark side," the student heroes are trained to be more empathetic. Most of these lessons revolve around perception, on becoming more attentive to the feelings of others. The students learn how to interpret micro-facial expressions—a fake smile looks different than a real smile—and practice listening to their classmates. Another important lesson revolves around the fundamental attribution error, a prevalent psychological bias in which people neglect the influence of context on behavior. "One of the main reasons we don't help others is because we assume they deserve what happened to them, that they must have done something wrong," Mr. Zimbardo says. "But most of the time it's just the situation playing itself out. We teach people how not to blame the victim."

The next phase of instruction has a grandiose title: "Internalizing the Heroic Imagination." The students begin studying the behavior of other heroes, past and present. They look at Harry Potter and Abraham Lincoln, Achilles and Martin Luther King. (Mr. Zimbardo is trying to create a "Heropedia," so that people can search a vast database to find heroes in their neighborhood or age group.) Because human behavior is profoundly shaped by those around us—we are all natural "peer modelers"—the project attempts to give students a more heroic set of peers. "Just look at the Milgram experiment," Mr. Zimbardo says. "Everybody uses that as an example of how bad people are. But the actual data aren't so depressing. If subjects watched someone else refuse to issue shocks, then they almost always refused, too. The hero created another hero."

The last step of hero training is the most important. The students begin rehearsing their heroism in the real world, translating the classroom lessons into positive changes. (No cape required.) The students start with baby steps, as they are instructed to do one thing every day that makes someone else feel better. Perhaps it's complimenting a bus driver,

*(continued on page 11)*

## Are heroes born, or can they be made?

(continued from page 10)

or helping mom make dinner, or spending quality time with grandpa. The goal is to break down the barrier that keeps good intentions from becoming virtuous actions. Though real heroes take risks, Zimbardo notes that one can't begin with reckless acts of altruism. Courage requires practice.

At the moment, the Heroic Imagination Project remains a modest endeavor, operating out of a single storefront in San Francisco. The project has just begun pilot programs at several middle schools and high schools in the Bay Area, with plans to develop additional seminars for business executives and young children next year. After graduating from the course, the heroes will be encouraged to stay in touch via a special online social network, a kind of Facebook for heroes. Mr. Zimbardo also plans on monitoring the long-term effects of the project, as he revises the curriculum to maximize its impact.

One day, though, Mr. Zimbardo hopes to have a hero project in every city. "One of the problems with our culture is that we've replaced heroes with celebrities," Mr. Zimbardo says. "We worship people who haven't done anything. It's time to get back to focusing on what matters, because we need real heroes more than ever." ❏

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### FROM THE ARCHIVES

#### RANCHER TURNED HERO IN BLIZZARD OF '48

Neither snow nor blizzards are unknown in the Texas panhandle, but an especially fierce storm that struck in February 1948 paralyzed the region. The two-day freeze resulted in the deaths of three people and would have included a fourth were it not for the heroic actions of rancher **Sam E. Wohlford**, 57.

On the evening of Feb. 10, as the storm moved into the area, Robert O. Reynolds, 21, was driving a pickup truck through a rural area about 80 miles north of Amarillo. With him were his mother-in-law, 47, and his daughter, 4, and two sons, 12 and 15 months. The truck skidded off the snow-covered road and entered a ditch, and when

he could not remove it, Reynolds walked to Wohlford's nearby ranch for help. Using his farm tractor, Wohlford pulled the truck back onto the roadway, and the Reynolds party went to Wohlford's ranch to warm themselves.

As the blizzard was bearing down, Wohlford invited his guests to remain overnight, but they departed, eager to resume traveling. The truck shortly became stuck in another ditch, about three miles from the ranch. With visibility steadily decreasing, Reynolds decided that he and the others would remain inside the truck until the storm subsided.



Wohlford, right, receiving an award for heroism during a severe blizzard in 1948

By daybreak, the storm had not lessened. A snowdrift blocked one of the truck's doors, and the children's breath had turned to ice on the quilts that covered them. At 9 a.m., with still no sign that the blizzard was subsiding, Reynolds left the truck and waded through snowdrifts for an hour to reach a residence. After a respite there, he left for the Wohlford ranch, reaching it about 4:30 p.m. Believing initially that it was another case of pulling the truck from a ditch, Wohlford was reluctant to venture outside, but when he learned that Reynolds's mother-in-law and the three children were inside the vehicle, he agreed immediately to go to their aid.

(continued on back cover)

### CONTINUUM



**GRAVE MARKERS** Bronze grave markers (above), cast in the likeness of the Carnegie Medal, are available at no cost to the families of deceased awardees. They are designed for mounting on stone or bronze memorials. Contact Susan Rizza ([susan@carnegiehero.org](mailto:susan@carnegiehero.org)) or write her at the address given below.

**MEDAL REFINISHING** The Hero Fund will refinish Carnegie Medals at no cost to the owner. The medals are to be sent to the Hero Fund's office by insured, registered mail. Allow a month for the process. The contact is Myrna Braun ([myrna@carnegiehero.org](mailto:myrna@carnegiehero.org)).

**OBITUARIES** Written accounts of the awardee's life, such as contained in an obituary, are sought for addition to the awardee's page on the Commission's website. Contact Doug Chambers ([doug@carnegiehero.org](mailto:doug@carnegiehero.org)).

**ANNUAL REPORTS** Copies of the Hero Fund's most recent annual reports (2008-2009) are available by contacting Gloria Barber ([gloria@carnegiehero.org](mailto:gloria@carnegiehero.org)).

**A CENTURY OF HEROES** The centennial book describing the first 100 years of the Hero Fund is available through the Commission's website ([www.carnegiehero.org](http://www.carnegiehero.org)).

**COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL** A silver medal struck in the likeness of the Carnegie Medal to commemorate the 2004 centennial of the Hero Fund is available for purchase through the Commission's website.

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imPULSE is a periodic newsletter of the CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION, a private operating foundation established in 1904 by Andrew Carnegie. • The Hero Fund awards the CARNEGIE MEDAL to those throughout the United States and Canada who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others. • The Commission also provides financial assistance, which may include scholarship aid and continuing grants, to the heroes and to the dependents of those awardees who are disabled or die as the result of their heroic acts.

Further information is available on-line or by contacting the Commission.

**Any ideas?** imPULSE welcomes your submissions for publication, and your ideas for consideration. Be in touch!

**Address change?** Please keep us posted!

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

**RANCHER TURNED HERO** (continued from page 11)



With a hastily constructed platform attached to his tractor, Wohlford set out for the truck with Reynolds. The temperature was eight degrees, but it seemed colder because of the 35 m.p.h. north wind. With snow ranging from four to eight and even 10 feet deep, Wohlford abandoned the road for adjacent fields, where the snow was not as deep. The men's trip was interrupted when they approached wire fences, the strands of which Wohlford had to cut.

restart it, and by 6 p.m. they reached their destination. Wohlford's rescue efforts continued: He set out alone to get medical help but became stranded when his tractor stalled again. Wondering through a field for an hour in search of a landmark, Wohlford came upon the home of a neighbor and waited there for any passing traffic.

At 3 a.m., the neighbor's wife went into labor, sending Wohlford out into the blizzard yet again, on foot, on another act of mercy. Winds were still at 35 m.p.h., and the temperature had fallen to zero. By counting steps between power-line poles, Wohlford made his way two miles to the home of the woman's sister. Through the efforts of the sister and her husband and Wohlford, a doctor who was summoned arrived by 9 a.m. and tended to both parties. Of Reynolds's party, only he and Kenneth survived, the others succumbing to exposure. The neighbor woman had a normal delivery, giving birth to a daughter. Wohlford suffered frostbite to his cheek but recovered.

The truck was not readily visible to the men because of the snowdrifts, but once they located it, they were startled to find that, inside, only 15-month-old Kenneth was conscious. Snow had entered the cab and covered the children's quilts. Traumatized, Reynolds was at first of little help in transferring the victims to the tractor's platform.

The nearest residence was about 1.5 miles away, and Wohlford headed in that direction. After covering a half-mile, the tractor's engine stalled, but Reynolds succeeded in turning the crank handle to

For his efforts, "Mr. Sam"—as he was known in the community—was awarded a silver Carnegie Medal in 1948. Dismissing accolades, he told one group: "I don't want you folks to think of me as a hero. But if you stop by my place and I tell you a blizzard is blowing up and ask you to stay the night, you'd better stay." Wohlford went on to represent the region in the Texas Legislature for three terms in the 1950s, and he died in 1978 at the age of 87. Reynolds died at age 80 in 2007, leaving a widow, four sons—including Kenneth—11 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren. ☞ —Marlin Ross, Case Investigator