



**CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION**  
*Recognizing civilian heroism in the United States and Canada*

412-281-1302 (telephone)  
 1-800-447-8900 (toll free)  
 412-281-5751 (fax)  
[www.carnegiehero.org](http://www.carnegiehero.org)  
[carnegiehero@carnegiehero.org](mailto:carnegiehero@carnegiehero.org)

436 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1101  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1841

*News Release*

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Contact: Eric P. Zahren  
 Toll free: 1-800-447-8900

**CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION RECOGNIZES 19  
 FOR ACTS OF EXTRAORDINARY CIVILIAN HEROISM**

PITTSBURGH, PA., JUNE 19, 2017—In its second award announcement of 2017, the CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION announced today that 19 individuals are being given the CARNEGIE MEDAL in recognition of their acts of outstanding civilian heroism. The medal is awarded throughout the United States and Canada to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others. Four of the latest awardees died in the performance of their heroic acts.

The heroes announced today bring to 39 the number of awards made to date in 2017 and to 9,953 the total number since the Pittsburgh-based Fund's inception in 1904. Commission Chair Mark Laskow stated that each of the awardees or their survivors will also receive a financial grant. Throughout the 113 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, \$39.1 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance.

The awardees are:

- |                                       |                        |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Stephanie Melinda Marino              | Manteca, Calif.        |
| Scott B. Keller                       | Tecumseh, Mich.        |
| Kenneth R. Atkinson, <i>deceased</i>  | Centennial, Colo.      |
| Robert Sunkel                         | Vero Beach, Fla.       |
| Linda Nolan                           | Vero Beach, Fla.       |
| Robbie Goering-Jensen                 | Ashland, Neb.          |
| Brian G. Bergkamp, <i>deceased</i>    | Cheney, Kan.           |
| Brett Bailes                          | Omaha, Neb.            |
| C. Fredric Holbeck                    | Omaha, Neb.            |
| Dennis Wilson                         | Omaha, Neb.            |
| David Blauzvern                       | Roslyn Heights, N.Y.   |
| Gary J. Messina                       | West Islip, N.Y.       |
| John J. Green III                     | New York City, N.Y.    |
| Louis Daniel Scharold                 | Alexandria, Ky.        |
| Dennis Joseph Michel, <i>deceased</i> | Ankeny, Iowa           |
| Robert Conant                         | Stoney Creek, Ont.     |
| Sean C. Randles, <i>deceased</i>      | Las Vegas, Nev.        |
| John David Smith                      | Snoqualmie Pass, Wash. |
| Victor M. Ortiz                       | Union, N.J.            |

Resumes of the acts follow. To nominate someone for the Carnegie Medal, write the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, 436 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1101, Pittsburgh, PA 15219; call 1-800-447-8900 (toll free); or email [carnegiehero@carnegiehero.org](mailto:carnegiehero@carnegiehero.org). Fuller information on the Carnegie Medal and the history of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission can be found at [carnegiehero.org](http://carnegiehero.org). Find us on Facebook: [facebook.com/carnegiehero](https://facebook.com/carnegiehero) and Twitter: [twitter.com/carnegie\\_hero](https://twitter.com/carnegie_hero).

**STEPHANIE MELINDA MARINO**  
Manteca, California

Stephanie Melinda Marino saved Anthony H. Ortiz from being struck by a train, Manteca, California, June 8, 2016. Ortiz, 27, was the passenger in a sport utility vehicle that left the highway, went down a steep embankment, and stopped upright, straddling a set of two railroad tracks. Another motorist, Marino, 35, hospice nurse, witnessed the accident and, stopping at the scene, ran down the embankment to the vehicle. Going to the vehicle's passenger side, she helped Ortiz, who was injured, stand outside it. A commuter train was approaching at about 70 m.p.h. and was about a quarter-mile away when its engineer saw the vehicle. He immediately applied the train's emergency brakes and sounded its horn, which first alerted Marino to the train's approach. In the seconds that it took for the train to reach the scene, Marino grabbed Ortiz, who was larger than she, and pulled him by an arm and his shirt toward the rear of the vehicle. She stepped off the tracks but maintained her grip on Ortiz as the train struck the vehicle at somewhat of a diminished speed and knocked it about 10 feet away. Marino and Ortiz fell to the ground, debris from the impact striking them. The train came to a stop about 2,000 feet beyond the point of impact. Ortiz required hospitalization for treatment of his injuries, and Marino recovered from bruising to her knees and cuts to her arms and hands. 88362-9935

**SCOTT B. KELLER**  
Tecumseh, Michigan

Scott B. Keller saved Yusuf Salem from burning, Dearborn Heights, Michigan, July 29, 2016. Yusuf, 7, was on the second floor of his family's two-story townhouse after a fire broke out in the kitchen, on the first floor, and filled that floor with dense smoke. On duty, Keller, 41, police officer, responded to the scene, where he learned that Yusuf was inside the burning house. Keller went to his hands and knees and crawled a short distance into the house, shouting for Yusuf. Yusuf responded, but, unable to breathe, Keller exited the unit for air. Given a shirt that he then held to his face, Keller re-entered the structure and, again crawling, followed the sound of Yusuf's voice. After advancing about 10 feet, Keller stood and ran to the base of the stairs leading to the second floor. He went part way up the stairs, finding Yusuf standing on one of the steps. Keller picked him up and, holding the shirt against Yusuf's face, descended the steps and returned to the front door. Exiting to safety, he handed Yusuf to another person and then collapsed to the ground. Firefighters responded shortly and extinguished the fire. Both Yusuf and Keller required hospital treatment for smoke inhalation, and they recovered, Keller missing two days' work. 88442-9936

**KENNETH R. ATKINSON, *deceased***  
Centennial, Colorado

Kenneth R. Atkinson died rescuing Elizabeth L. Lyons from assault, Centennial, Colorado, April 4, 2016. Lyons, 44, was shot by her husband after she fled through the front door of their house and went across the street to a neighbor's property, where the neighbor was working in her front yard. The assailant fired repeatedly toward the women, after which Atkinson, 65, physician, who lived beside Lyons and her husband, left his house, crossed the street, and responded to Lyons. As he was kneeling to tend her and call 911, another neighbor who had gone outside shouted to Atkinson that the assailant was approaching. The assailant fired at Atkinson, striking him in a leg. Atkinson stood and sought cover at a vehicle parked nearby in the driveway, but the assailant went to him there and at close range shot him again before returning to his property. Sheriff's deputies responded shortly and arrested him. Lyons required hospitalization for treatment of her wounds. Atkinson was mortally wounded. 88190-9937

**ROBERT SUNKEL**  
**LINDA NOLAN**  
Vero Beach, Florida

Robert Sunkel and Linda Nolan rescued Cheryle D. Coons from burning, Vero Beach, Florida, March 23, 2016. Coons, 58, was the driver of a car that, at a rural intersection, collided with a tank truck. Badly injured and trapped, she remained in the driver's seat as the car caught fire. The tank truck, which came to a stop about 10 feet away, was also burning, as was the diesel fuel that leaked from it. Responding to the scene, Sunkel, 25, on-duty deputy sheriff, broke out the window of the car's front passenger door with his baton. He then opened that door and leaned inside as fire burned at the car's front end, flames reaching the windshield and dashboard. The heat was intense. Sunkel grabbed Coons but could not free her, and he withdrew from the car. A second deputy on duty, Nolan, 45, arrived with a fire extinguisher about then. She entered the car through the same door, pulled Coons partially over the console, and then, exiting, emptied the extinguisher into the car and onto its hood, as flames were intensifying. Sunkel made another entry. He grasped Coons, pulled her to the roadway, and then with Nolan dragged her to safety. Flames grew to engulf the car and destroy both vehicles. Coons was hospitalized for treatment of burns and other injuries, from which she died three weeks later. Nolan required hospital treatment for a first-degree burn to her right hand, and she recovered. 88204-9938 / 88205-9939

**ROBBIE GOERING-JENSEN**  
Ashland, Nebraska

Robbie Goering-Jensen saved Gregory L. and Lula M. Damper from burning, Omaha, Nebraska, December 20, 2015. Gregory, 57, was in a wheelchair in the living room of his family's one-story house after fire broke out in a bedroom at the far end of the structure, and his mother, Lula, 83, was in a bedroom off a hall near the living room. Goering-Jensen, 49, police officer, was on duty nearby when he saw dense smoke and flames issuing from the eaves of the house. He responded to the scene and learned that the house was occupied. Entering the living room through the front door, he used his flashlight to see Gregory's wheelchair across the room. Goering-Jensen crawled through dense smoke to the chair, grasped it by a footrest, and pulled it, with Gregory, back to the door, where other responding officers took Gregory to safety. Having heard cries for help from inside the house, Goering-Jensen learned that Lula was in her bedroom. He again entered the structure and, again crawling across the living room through dense smoke, followed Lula's cries to her room. Entering the room, he stood, lifted Lula from her bed, and retraced his path back to the front door and outside to safety. Gregory and Lula were treated at the scene, but Goering-Jensen was taken by ambulance to the hospital for treatment of smoke inhalation. He recovered. 87935-9940

**BRIAN G. BERGKAMP, *deceased***  
Cheney, Kansas

Brian G. Bergkamp died attempting to save Kristen L. Eck from drowning, Wichita, Kansas, July 9, 2016. On the high and fast-moving Arkansas River, Eck, 26, was in a kayak that went over a low-head dam and overturned in the boil of water at its base. She submerged repeatedly as she struggled to escape the turbulent water. Another kayaker in her party, Bergkamp, 24, seminary student, followed her over the dam. He stopped paddling, keeping his kayak in the turbulent conditions rather than proceeding to calmer water downstream, as other kayakers were doing. Bergkamp procured a loose life jacket from the water and provided it to Eck, who soon lost hold of it. At some point, Bergkamp was separated from his kayak, which capsized and was washed away from him. Eck was able to escape the boil and float downstream, where another man in her party helped her exit the river. Bergkamp drowned, his body recovered from the river farther downstream several days later. 88552-9944

**BRETT BAILES**  
**C. FREDRIC HOLBECK**  
**DENNIS WILSON**  
Omaha, Nebraska

Brett Bailes, C. Fredric Holbeck, and Dennis Wilson saved Nathaniel A. Wissink from burning, Omaha, Nebraska, February 26, 2016. Wissink, 28, was unconscious and trapped in the front passenger seat of a car after it was struck on its driver's side by a pickup truck traveling at high speed through a residential neighborhood. The car, which burst into flame, was demolished, with its back end split almost apart from the front, its fuel tank ruptured, and most windows broken out. Flames issued from the rear of the vehicle, including the backseat area, and were spreading toward the front seats, producing dense smoke. Bailes, 31, sales manager, was at his home nearby and immediately ran to the scene, where he saw a backseat passenger, aflame, step from the wreckage. He extinguished the flames on her. Meanwhile, Holbeck, 54, biologist, who also lived nearby, also immediately ran to the scene to find the car's driver emerging through the window of the driver's door. Holbeck aided him from the vehicle and took him to safety. Likewise, another neighbor, Wilson, 66, retired field investigator, immediately ran to the scene and with the two other men learned that Wissink was still in the vehicle. After going to the car's front passenger door, which he could not open, Bailes joined Holbeck and Wilson at the driver's door, where Holbeck had bent down the window frame. In repeated attempts, the men reached through the opening, locating Wissink but finding that he was trapped by wreckage. They pulled on him until he was freed, Wilson standing adjacent to flames at the rear of the vehicle. The men pulled Wissink head first through the opening and dragged him to safety, flames shortly engulfing the car's interior. Wissink required hospitalization for treatment of his injuries.

88111-9941 / 88206-9942 / 88181-9943

**DAVID BLAUZVERN**  
Roslyn Heights, New York

**GARY J. MESSINA**  
West Islip, New York

**JOHN J. GREEN III**  
New York City, New York

David Blauzvern, Gary J. Messina, and John J. Green III saved a man from drowning, New York City, New York, June 1, 2016. The man was bobbing in the East River at a point about 60 feet from a seawall, the top of which was about 8 feet above the surface of the water. Jogging at the scene, Blauzvern, 23, investment banking analyst, immediately climbed over a railing and jumped from the seawall into the 23-foot-deep water, followed by Messina, 56, on-duty police captain, and Green, 29, insurance broker, both of whom had also been jogging nearby. The three rescuers swam to where the man, who had by then submerged, was last seen, Blauzvern arriving there first. He submerged and pulled the man, who greatly outweighed him, by his shirt to the surface of the water and then grasped him from behind and supported him as he trod water. Messina and Green then each grasped the man by an arm. Together, they swam back toward the seawall with the man, but the swift current carried them downstream, to a point at the wall about 600 feet from where they entered the river. As there was no egress from the water there, they remained in position, Green securing a hold to the wall while Blauzvern and Messina trod water. A police rescue boat arrived within minutes, but as it could not get close to the wall, Blauzvern, Messina, and Green swam and were carried by the current as they took the man to the boat. All four were assisted from the water and taken to safety, the man requiring hospital treatment. Blauzvern was cold and nearly exhausted, and Green sustained minor cuts to his hands and feet. They recovered.

88313-9945 / 88314-9946 / 88315-9947

**LOUIS DANIEL SCHAROLD**  
Alexandria, Kentucky

Louis Daniel Scharold saved Brian C. Ashcraft from burning, Grants Lick, Kentucky, April 25, 2016. Ashcraft, 48, was the driver of a refuse truck that was struck nearly head on by a pickup truck traveling in the wrong direction on a four-lane highway. Both vehicles overturned, the pickup coming to rest upside down partially atop a guide rail and the refuse truck on its driver's side, its front end in close proximity to the wreckage of the pickup. The pickup's fuel tank ruptured in the accident, leaking fuel, and that vehicle caught fire. Scharold, 72, retired truck driver, was driving nearby and witnessed the accident. He immediately approached the front of the refuse vehicle and saw Ashcraft, who was dazed, standing inside the cab. Despite intense heat from the nearby flames, Scharold reached through the broken-out windshield of the refuse truck, grasped Ashcraft by an arm, and, backing, led him from the vehicle and away to safety. Growing flames shortly spread to the front of the refuse truck. Ashcraft required hospital treatment for his injuries. 88358-9948

**DENNIS JOSEPH MICHEL, deceased**  
Ankeny, Iowa

Dennis Joseph Michel died assisting in an attempt to save Jacob B. Seeman from drowning, Camdenton, Missouri, August 1, 2016. Seeman, 40, jumped from a dock in the Niangua Arm of the Lake of the Ozarks to retrieve a boat that was drifting from the dock. After a few strokes, he struggled in the water and called out for help, alerting his brother-in-law, Michel, 46, analyst, and Michel's wife. From the dock, Michel jumped into the 10-foot-deep water and swam to Seeman, joining Michel's wife, who had swum out from the bank. Michel placed an arm around Seeman's upper body as his wife held Seeman by the waist, but Seeman continued to struggle. The men submerged. Firefighters arrived after Michel's wife reached safety at the dock, and a dive team recovered Seeman's and Michel's bodies within three hours at a point about 75 feet from the dock. They had drowned. 88449-9949

**ROBERT CONANT**  
Stoney Creek, Ontario

Robert Conant helped to save Daniel Fredericks from falling, Oakville, Ontario, April 18, 2015. Fredericks, 23, slid about 20 feet down the steep wall of a ravine at a provincial park to recover his dog and then became stranded, at a point about 10 feet above the wall's abrupt drop. He grabbed a branch of a tree protruding from the cliff and held to it with one arm as he secured his dog with the other. Responding to the scene, Conant, 29, on-duty police officer, concluded there was insufficient time to await trained rescuers. He tied one end of a worn rope that was at the scene around his chest as a bystander tied the other end to a tree root. Conant then lowered himself to Fredericks, turning to face the ravine and thereby transferring all of his weight to the rope. Although Fredericks outweighed him, Conant helped him to reposition himself so that he straddled the branch. Backup officers lowered a line to Conant that he used to secure himself further, and firefighters who responded after several minutes employed a series of ropes and a harness to secure and remove Fredericks and his dog to the top of the cliff, about an hour after his ordeal began. Conant was then raised in similar fashion, having spent 30 minutes on the cliff face. Both he and Fredericks sustained minor injury, Conant's including a bruised chest, and they recovered. 88647-9950

**SEAN C. RANDLES, deceased**  
Las Vegas, Nevada

Sean C. Randles died attempting to save Melanie L. Kushnir from falling, Las Vegas, Nevada, May 28, 2016. Kushnir, 42, was hiking down a sandstone mountain at Red Rock National Conservation Area when she slipped and slid in a stream of water toward the nearby brink of a 50-foot cliff. Another hiker in her party, Randles, 49, marketing manager, was near the stream at a point about 6 feet from the edge of the cliff. He lunged at Kushnir as she approached and grabbed onto her. Unable to stop her momentum, Randles held to her as they went over the cliff and fell to the rock shelf at its base. Both suffered severe injuries and died at the scene. 88309-9951

**JOHN DAVID SMITH**  
Snoqualmie Pass, Washington

John David Smith saved Kaarisa B. Karley from burning, Snoqualmie, Washington, July 18, 2016. Karley, 70, was slumped over in the front seats of her coupe after an interstate highway accident in which the vehicle was struck from behind by a pickup truck. Demolished, the back of the car was lodged under the front of the truck and caught fire, as did the truck. Another motorist, Smith, 47, off-duty police officer, witnessed the accident. He approached the driver's door of Karley's vehicle and, finding that it was jammed shut, worked to force it open. He reached inside the car and grasped Karley about the waist, but she did not move. Concluding that her safety belt was holding her in place, Smith knelt on the driver's seat, extended his upper body across the center console, and grasped Karley by the shoulders. He then repositioned her in the driver's seat, released her safety belt, and, grasping her under the arms, backed from the vehicle with her. As he dragged her toward the side of the highway, another motorist approached and with Smith carried Karley to safety. Flames grew and spread quickly to engulf the vehicles. Karley required hospital treatment for her injuries, but she was not burned. Smith suffered from a sore neck in the following days but recovered fully. 88424-9952

**VICTOR M. ORTIZ**  
Union, New Jersey

Victor M. Ortiz saved a man from being struck by a train, Secaucus, New Jersey, August 26, 2016. The man went to a point between the rails of a track at a commuter train station as an express train traveling at 60 m.p.h. approached the station on that track. A transit police officer who had responded to the station, Ortiz, 41, advanced to the man, who lay face down on the track and grasped its rails. Ortiz handcuffed one of the man's hands and pulled it from the rail, but the man, who greatly outweighed Ortiz, resisted Ortiz's attempts to remove him from the track. Seeing the train approach, Ortiz stepped between the rails of the track, but the man continued to struggle against him. Ortiz tugged hard on the man as the train, then in emergency braking, bore down on them. He dragged the man from the track just seconds before the front of the train passed them. 88536-9953