



CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION

436 Seventh Ave., Suite 1101 Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1841
412-281-1302 | 1-800-447-8900 | fax: 412-281-5751 | carnegiehero.org

News release

FOR RELEASE:
March 18, 2019

Contact: Jewels Phraner
1-800-447-8900

19 NAMED CARNEGIE HEROES FOR ACTS OF EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM

PITTSBURGH, March 18, 2019—The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission today recognized 19 Americans as Carnegie heroes for risking their lives while trying to save others, including six children and three truck drivers trapped in their burning rigs that caught fire after highway accidents.

One of the 19 heroes, **Van U. Thang**, was 17 years old at the time of his rescue. Three others gave their lives during their rescue act: **Steven B. Wahler** and **Bradley Eugene Murphy**, who both responded to a mother’s cries for help as a wave carried her 12-year-old son away from the beach in the Gulf of Mexico, and **Malik Andre Williams**, who jumped into the Mississippi River after his 6-year-old son who had fallen into the water. All three men drowned, but the children they died trying to rescue were saved.

The Carnegie Medal is given throughout the U.S. and Canada to those who risk their lives to an extraordinary degree while saving or attempting to save the lives of others. With this first announcement of 2019 recipients, a total of 10,081 Carnegie Medals have been awarded since the Pittsburgh-based Fund’s inception in 1904. Commission Chair Mark Laskow said each of the awardees or their survivors will also receive a financial grant. Throughout the more than 115 years since the Fund was established by industrialist-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, \$40.8 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance. The awardees are:

Steven B. Wahler*	Owensboro, Ky.	David J. Connelly	Providence Forge, Va.
Bradley Eugene Murphy*	Elberta, Ala.	Charles Franklin Hoop	Wendell, Idaho
Malik Andre Williams*	Galesburg, Ill.	Omar Lee	Louisville, Ky.
Van U. Thang	East Moline, Ill.	James Wyatt	Clarksville, Ind.
Timothy Hunley	Wilmington, N.C.	Michael James Jordan	Sterling, Conn.
Kristian B. Harrison	Dayton, Ky.	Wyatt Jordan	Sterling, Conn.
Arcangelo F. Liberatore	Hawthorne, N.Y.	Christopher M. Olup	Willowick, Ohio
Nicholas Anderson	San Francisco	Robert Prochazka	Willoughby, Ohio
Kali Allen	Broken Arrow, Okla.	Christopher Schafer	Hayti, S.D.
Peter C. Di Pinto, Sr.	Brookhaven, N.Y.		

*deceased

Summaries of the acts to follow. To nominate someone for the Carnegie Medal, complete a nomination form online or write to the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission, 426 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).

Steven B. Wahler, *deceased*
Owensboro, Ky.
Bradley Eugene Murphy, *deceased*
Elberta, Ala.

Steven B. Wahler, 47, and Bradley Eugene Murphy, 21, both died during an Oct. 9, 2017, rescue in Gulf Shores, Ala. A 12-year-old boy was playing in rough surf in the Gulf of Mexico when a rip current carried him 100 feet from shore in water over his head. Waves up to 5 feet high were breaking close to shore when the boy's mother asked Wahler, an IT manager, and Murphy, a landscaper, to help. With a boogie board, Wahler entered the water and swam to the boy, placing him on the board. Wahler began pushing the board toward shore, but a breaking wave separated the two, and Wahler was carried farther from shore. The boy's mother, also using a boogie board, reached her son and guided him back to shore. Murphy, who had also entered the water, swam toward Wahler and appeared to reach him before both men submerged. The boy was examined by medics but was not injured. Rescuers recovered Wahler and Murphy later, and they had drowned.

Malik Andre Williams, *deceased*
Galesburg, Ill.
Van U. Thang
East Moline, Ill.

Malik Andre Williams, 25, and 17-year-old Van U. Thang rescued a 6-year-old boy who had fallen into the Mississippi River June 6, 2017, in Moline, Ill. Williams, a laborer, jumped feet first into the river after his son, Jaden, fell into water with a strong current. Williams submerged and resurfaced a few feet from Jaden and then floundered with Jaden near the dock, both submerging. Van, a high school student, arrived and, despite having limited swimming ability, waded and then swam 15 feet to Jaden, who had resurfaced. Van grasped Jaden's arm and towed him back to the bank where he handed him to his mother. Jaden swallowed water and was taken to the hospital and recovered. Jaden's father did not resurface and drowned. Van was not injured.

Timothy Hunley
Wilmington, N.C.

Forty-three-year-old film set painter Timothy Hunley was traveling March 29, 2018, on an interstate highway in Walterboro, S.C., when he witnessed an accident in which a semi-tractor that was towing a motorhome and trailer containing a vehicle and fuel containers left the highway and entered a wooded median, striking several trees and catching fire. Hunley ran to the scene and saw passenger Silvia Y. Valladares, 40, inside the cab. Despite flames burning at the truck's front end and inside the cab, Hunley stepped onto the wreckage, nearly entered the cab completely through the broken-out windshield, and grasped Valladares, hugging her to him. He backed from the truck pulling Valladares with him. As Hunley stepped down from the cab, he fell to the ground, landing on his back with Valladares on top of him. He then dragged her away from the truck, and others aided her to safety. Flames grew to engulf the cab and spread to the motorhome and trees surrounding the vehicle. The driver of the truck died. Valladares required hospital treatment for her injuries, which included severe burns. Hunley suffered minor burns to his arms and recovered.

Kristian B. Harrison

Dayton, Ky.

In the early morning of Nov. 24, 2017, Kristian B. Harrison, 47, a concrete finisher, responded barefoot to his neighbor's Dayton, Ky., burning house after being awakened by a man yelling for help. Despite seeing flames coming from inside the house, Harrison forced open the home's front door and entered the house. He went to his knees and crawled inside about 18 feet to a man, 29, who was unresponsive on the floor. As the ceiling above them burned, Harrison grasped the man by the ankles and dragged him while crawling backward to the front door, where others helped him move the man across the street. The man suffered severe burns; Harrison was not injured.

Arcangelo F. Liberatore

Hawthorne, N.Y.

Off-duty police officer Arcangelo F. Liberatore, 31, rescued a 5-year-old girl from an attacking coyote on April 29, 2018, in Thornwood, N.Y. Natalia K. Petrellese was playing in a park with her brother and mother when a rabid coyote approached them and bit Natalia's arm, latching onto it. The coyote dragged Natalia to the ground, where her mother attempted to fight it off. Liberatore was at the playground with his family when he heard screams. He ran to Natalia, grabbed the coyote, and pinned it to the ground. It released Natalia, whose mother took her to safety. Liberatore struggled to restrain the aggressive coyote, which attempted to bite him for several minutes. Police arrived and shot and killed the coyote. A bite wound to Natalia's arm required sutures. Liberatore sustained scratches to his hand. Both of them were treated for rabies and recovered.

Nicholas Anderson

San Francisco

Forty-five-year-old Nicholas Anderson saved five people from burning when he stopped at the scene of a May 26, 2017, accident in Willits, Calif. Six people were inside a pickup truck that collided with an SUV. Fire broke out at the front ends of both vehicles. With another man's help, Anderson, an operations manager, pried open one of the truck's rear doors and freed a 7-year-old boy from his seat and removed a 22-month-old girl from her safety seat, handing her off to another person. As Anderson moved around the truck to reach the passenger side, he heard a man, 24, moaning from inside the covered bed. He reached through the cover's rear window and lifted the injured man through it, lowering him to the road. He then entered twice more to remove two women, 19 and 43, from the truck, as flames licked the front windshield. The fire rapidly spread and engulfed both vehicles; neither driver survived.

Kali Allen

Broken Arrow, Okla.

On Jan. 4, 2018, Kali Allen, 38, delivery truck driver, attempted to rescue 55-year-old Jeffrey K. McIlroy from drowning in Catoosa, Okla. McIlroy had fallen through ice into a deep pond. After being alerted by a woman, Allen ran to the pond, where he saw McIlroy partially submerged. Allen stepped onto the ice, but heard it cracking and backed away. He obtained a flotation device, and then slid toward McIlroy. Seeing him completely submerge, Allen ran to the edge of the hole and entered the open water. He submerged attempting to find McIlroy but was unable to locate him. Allen resurfaced and used the pool noodle to aid his floating because he could not lift himself out of the water. From a bank, responding firefighters tied multiple ropes together and tossed the extended line to Allen. Once Allen secured the line around his body, they pulled him onto the ice and to the bank. A diver later located McIlroy, who had drowned. Allen was treated at the hospital for hypothermia.

Peter C. Di Pinto, Sr.

Brookhaven, N.Y.

A 64-year-old retired teacher saved a woman from being struck by a train Oct. 10, 2017, in Brookhaven, N.Y. Janice C. Esposito, 43, was driving a van when it collided with another vehicle and came to rest straddling a nearby railroad track. Peter C. Di Pinto, Sr., heard the crash from his nearby home and responded. He ran to the driver's door of the van, which was smashed and told a dazed Esposito that she needed to exit. Suddenly the crossing's gates descended and lights flashed warning them of the approaching commuter train, traveling at 65 m.p.h. Di Pinto ran to the passenger side of the van, opened the front, passenger door, reached in, and grasped Esposito. Di Pinto pulled her through the door and moved her off the track to safety behind a signal box. The train, which had slightly slowed, struck the van about six seconds after Di Pinto had removed Esposito.

David J. Connelly

Providence Forge, Va.

Thirty-year-old crane inspector David J. Connelly rescued a couple in their 60s from drowning in a submerging vehicle on Dec. 22, 2016, in Doswell, Va. Brian D. Turner, 62, and his wife, Mary M. Turner, 60, were on an interstate highway, when an accident caused their vehicle to roll over a concrete barrier and fall into the Little River below. Connelly, who was driving nearby, ran down an embankment and, fully clothed, entered the river and swam to the vehicle. He pulled on the driver's door, forcing it open, and entered the sinking car. He unlatched Brian's seat belt, grasped him around his arms, and removed him from the vehicle. Connelly then reentered the vehicle and submerged to unlatch Mary's seat belt, and then grasped her around the arms and pulled her from the front, passenger seat. Holding to both the husband and wife, Connelly maneuvered them to the bank of the river. Brian was treated for minor injuries and recovered. Mary suffered serious injuries in the accident. Connelly suffered cuts to his hands and recovered.

Charles Franklin Hoop

Wendell, Idaho

Sheriff's deputy Charles Franklin Hoop saved a 19-year-old man from falling off a bridge, 486 feet above the Snake River on Dec. 14, 2017, in Twin Falls, Idaho. Hoop, 40, was dispatched to the scene, where a man, who was shouting incoherently, had positioned himself on the outside of the bridge's railing. Hoop approached the man from behind and stabilized himself by extending a leg through the vertical slats on the railing before lunging forward to bear-hug the man around his chest. The man released his grip and went limp forcing Hoop to support his full weight. Hoop held him against the railing and then pulled the man up and over the railing to the walkway. Hoop was not injured, and the sheriff later stated that by risking being pulled over the bridge himself, Hoop went above and beyond his call of duty

Omar Lee

Louisville, Ky.

James Wyatt

Clarksville, Ind.

After a Nov. 7, 2017, interstate accident in Louisville, Ky., 59-year-old Brad E. Vandeventer remained in the cabin of a semi-truck that had overturned onto its passenger side and slid into a retaining wall. Fire burned on the truck's undercarriage, at its front end, and on the road where leaked diesel fluid pooled. Forty-year-old off-duty police officer Omar Lee and 42-year-old teacher James Wyatt went to the truck. Lee used his flashlight to strike the windshield, but he could not break it. After an air hose ruptured, flames intensified and they stepped back, but then returned to the truck. Lee used his handheld radio to break out a skylight window of the overturned truck. At the opening there, both Lee and Wyatt grasped Vandeventer and pulled him from the truck and carried him to safety. Flames grew to consume the truck, but Vandeventer was not burned.

Michael James Jordan and Wyatt Jordan

Sterling, Conn.

Loggers Michael James Jordan, 47, and his son, Wyatt, 20, saved a 24-year-old woman who was trapped inside her burning pickup truck after a highway accident on Nov. 14, 2017, in Killingly, Conn. Jordan ran to driver's side of the truck and attempted to open the door, but it was jammed. He grasped the door frame and pulled on it. His boot caught fire. He stamped his foot to put out the flames, and then Wyatt arrived at the truck to help, and they both pulled on the door frame until there was a gap large enough to remove the driver, Alicia E. Brunnett. Despite heavy smoke and intense heat, the rescuers reached through the gap, grasped Brunnett, and pulled her from the truck, while Jordan freed her legs from underneath the dashboard. Jordan's pant leg caught fire, and he smothered the flames. They moved her away from the truck. Brunnett was hospitalized for broken limbs and internal injuries sustained in the accident, but she was not burned. Jordan sustained a burn to his right shin, and he recovered.

Christopher M. Olup

Willowick, Ohio

Robert Prochazka

Willoughby, Ohio

Police officers Christopher M. Olup, 34, and Robert Prochazka, 49, saved a man from a burning Willowick, Ohio, home on April 5, 2016. The 54-year-old man, who had mobility issues, discovered a fire on the first floor of his house. The man crawled to a point at least 15 feet from the front door. Olup responded to the scene with Prochazka, and they entered the house, soon retreating after being overcome with smoke that made it difficult to see. While Prochazka went to his car to retrieve a flashlight, Olup re-entered the home crawling and called out for the man, who responded. Finding him, Olup grasped his wrist, rose to a crouching position, and dragged him toward the front door. Prochazka then re-entered, crawled until he located Olup, and then pulled Olup by the belt to the front door, while Olup continued to drag the man. At the doorway, a third officer arrived to assist in carrying the man to the front lawn. Olup, Prochazka, and the man were treated at a hospital for smoke inhalation. They recovered.

Christopher Schafer

Hayti, S.D.

County tax assessor Christopher Schafer, 42, helped save 16-year-old farmer Colt J. Brink from a burning semi-truck after an Aug. 17, 2017, accident in Blunt, S.D. Colt was semi-conscious and partly buried by wheat grain inside the cab of the tractor-trailer after it collided with a train at a crossing. Flames broke out in the truck's engine compartment, in the spilled grain, and among leaking diesel fuel from the truck. Schafer was driving nearby when he came upon the accident and went to the truck. He briefly fought flames with a fire extinguisher, but unable to squelch the flames, he then pulled on the driver's door of the cab. Another person joined him, and together they forced the door open. With flames issuing from the undercarriage threatening to breach the truck's fuel tanks, Schafer and another man extended themselves into the cab and grasped Colt under the arms. They pulled him from the cab moments before the cab was fully engulfed in flames. Colt was hospitalized two weeks with injuries sustained in the accident, but he was not burned. He recovered.