



CARNEGIE HERO FUND COMMISSION

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News release

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18 NAMED CARNEGIE HEROES FOR ACTS OF EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM

PITTSBURGH, Dec. 16, 2019—Eighteen individuals will receive a Carnegie Medal – the highest honor for civilian heroism in the U.S. and Canada – for risking their lives while trying to save others from drowning, burning vehicles, or burning homes. Three of those heroes who died during their courageous acts will receive the honor posthumously – **Melissa Anne Lehew**, **David S. Turner, Sr.**, and **Mir Khaled Ahmad**.

The Carnegie Hero Fund Commission today recognized these 17 Americans and one Canadian for risking their lives while trying to save others from perilous, life-threatening situations including **Zachary Salce** and **Maddison Henslin** who crawled under flames to pull a downstairs neighbor from her burning apartment, and **Maciej Kosiarski**, who dropped into an overturned SUV’s passenger compartment to assist its driver to safety.

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 final announcement of 2019 recipients, a total of 10,135 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, \$41.3 million has been given in one-time grants, scholarship aid, death benefits, and continuing assistance.

The awardees are:

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|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Kyle Bowman | Aberdeen, Md. | Julius A. Ortenzo | Prescott, Ariz. |
| Melissa Anne Lehew* | Darlington, Md. | Dylan M. Goetsch | Sturgis, S.D. |
| Steven W. Fitzpatrick | Marysville, Wash. | Christopher W. Schmoker | Sturgis, S.D. |
| Sean R. Dias | Braintree, Mass. | Philip L. Hall | Albuquerque, N.M. |
| Maciej Kosiarski | Schaumburg, Ill. | Daniel Simonelli | San Diego |
| Tyler James Hance | Fort Covington, N.Y. | Christopher E. Lawless | North Sydney, N.S. |
| David S. Turner, Sr.* | Lubbock, Texas | Zachary Salce | Lompoc, Calif. |
| Mir Khaled Ahmad* | Vacaville, Calif. | Maddison Henslin | Lompoc, Calif. |
| Michael Benjamin James | Belleville, N.J. | Danny Lee Tiger | Ada, Okla. |

*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, 436 Seventh Ave., Suite 1101, Pittsburgh, PA 15219. More information on the Carnegie Medal and the history of the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission can be found at carnegiehero.org. Follow us on Facebook: facebook.com/carnegiehero and Twitter: [@carnegie_hero](https://twitter.com/carnegie_hero).

Kyle Bowman

Aberdeen, Md.

Melissa Anne Lehew, *deceased*

Darlington, Md.

During heavy rain, motorist Daniel E. Samis, 67, was stranded in his car on a flooded section of road Aug. 31, 2018, in Bel Air, Md. Driving nearby, 31-year-old Kyle Bowman, a tree trimmer, and his partner, Melissa Anne Lehew, 34, saw Samis's car and stopped at the scene. Bowman backed his pickup truck to the water's edge about 100 feet away and, after tying a rope to his truck's rear, waded toward Samis's car holding the other end of the rope. Lehew, also holding to the rope, followed. Shortly, Lehew lost her footing and fell into the water. Bowman went to her and helped her to her feet, but they became separated. Lehew was carried downstream by the current and away from the scene, drowning. Samis's car, with him inside, was also washed away and his body was later recovered from his car. Bowman exited the water safely.

Steven W. Fitzpatrick

Marysville, Wash.

Retired laborer Steven W. Fitzpatrick, on April 18, 2018, responded to his neighbor's burning mobile home. With fire extinguishers, Fitzpatrick entered the home's living room through the front door. Fitzpatrick crawled to 88-year-old Theodore Shockley, who was unconscious on the living room floor near a flaming couch. Fitzpatrick used a fire extinguisher near Shockley to suppress flames, then grabbed Shockley and moved him toward the front door. Forced to retreat by the blistering heat, Fitzpatrick exited the home briefly and then returned to Shockley. With difficulty, he moved Shockley to the threshold of the front door, where another man grasped Shockley and pulled him from the home. Fitzpatrick exited the house, which was shortly engulfed by flames. Shockley sustained smoke inhalation and extensive burns; he died later that day. Fitzpatrick sustained burns to his head, forearm, and hand, for which he received hospital treatment. He recovered.

Sean R. Dias

Braintree, Mass.

Police officer Sean R. Dias, 37, was first on the scene of a burning home Nov. 19, 2017, in Braintree, Mass. Dias located a 69-year-old man sitting in a wheelchair just inside the front door of the home. While Dias aided him outside, the man told Dias that his wife, Diane V. Gray, 70, and son, 45, remained inside the structure. Despite flames at the roof and window to the son's room, Dias entered the house and saw flames at that room's doorway. He called out for Gray, who answered. Dias followed her voice and located her sitting in the living room. Dias lifted Gray to his shoulder, but, disoriented by darkness and smoke, he had difficulty retracing his path to the front door. Ultimately Dias found the door and exited with Gray. He went to his knees, while others aided Gray farther from the house. Their son could not be rescued and died in the fire. Gray was hospitalized for inhaling smoke, but she was not burned. Dias was treated at the hospital for smoke inhalation. He recovered.

Maciej Kosiarski
Schaumburg, Ill.

A 30-year-old pizza delivery driver was returning to the pizzeria July 3, 2018, when he saw an overturned SUV off a two-lane highway in South Barrington, Ill. Smoke was issuing from the vehicle's engine, and the sole occupant, 61-year-old Mohanakumari Naidu, was trapped in the driver's seat. Maciej Kosiarski of Schaumburg, Ill., stopped his car and went to the scene, where he climbed onto the driver's side of the overturned car and opened the rear, driver's-side door. He entered the vehicle and stood on the inside of the rear, passenger-side door. Naidu tumbled down from the driver's seat and entered the rear seat area, while Kosiarski pulled himself out of the car. Kosiarski reached down and grasped Naidu, pulling her up to the driver's side. He then climbed down the car and grasped Naidu, carrying her to safety.

Tyler James Hance
Fort Covington, N.Y.

Tyler James Hance, a 25-year-old laborer, spotted a sinking SUV in an ice-covered pond Dec. 11, 2018, in Kirksville, Mo. Undressing to his jeans, he waded into the 39-degree water and swam to Christian B. Perez, 62, who had been a passenger in the vehicle. Perez had left the sinking car and called for help at a point about 30 feet from the bank where water was 12 feet deep. When Hance reached Perez, he was non-responsive. Hance grasped his shoulder and, with difficulty, swam toward a point on the pond's bank, about 40 feet away. When Hance, still towing Perez, was within 15 feet of the bank, he submerged once. When he resurfaced, the nearly exhausted Hance called for help. Three other men waded into the pond about 5 feet, and Hance closed the remaining distance, so they could assist both men from the pond. Medical personnel revived Perez who recovered. Hance was not injured.

David S. Turner, Sr., *deceased*
Lubbock, Texas

A father died attempting to save his daughter from their burning home Nov. 20, 2018, in Lubbock, Texas. David S. Turner, Sr., a 70-year-old retired parole officer, entered his burning home after learning that his disabled daughter, Priscilla Turner, 38, was still inside. As smoke issued through the front door, Turner entered the house. Conditions in the house worsened and the fire spread throughout two bedrooms on one side of the home. Firefighters found Priscilla and Turner a short distance apart. Priscilla suffered severe burns and died 11 weeks later. Turner suffered smoke inhalation and was burned. He died the following day.

Mir Khaled Ahmad, *deceased*
Vacaville, Calif.

On a family outing to the American River near Kyburz, Calif., on June 23, 2018, 9-year-old Mir Zahed Ahmad fell from a rock into the swift-moving river. Despite not knowing how to swim, Mir Zahed's father, Mir Khaled Ahmad, 41, store manager, jumped in after his son. Ahmad grasped Mir Zahed in a bear hug and lifted him so his head was above the surface of the water. Ahmad submerged and resurfaced many times before Ahmad pushed Mir Zahed toward the rock. Another man on the rock held one end of a long stick out to Mir Zahed, who grasped it. The man pulled the boy to the top of the rock. Ahmad submerged and his body was recovered more than 600 feet downstream. He had drowned.

Michael Benjamin James
Belleville, N.J.

Arriving after a car crashed into Belleville's Passaic River on March 4, 2019, railroad signal maintainer Michael Benjamin James, 36, stopped at the scene and entered the 37-degree river. The driver, Mariam S. Egberongbe, had escaped from the sinking car and positioned herself on its trunk. Despite still recovering from neck surgery, James swam to Egberongbe, grasped her, and towed her toward the nearest bank, which had no egress from the water. James secured Egberongbe with a piece of wood as he attempted to move them closer to the bank. Those present at the scene, including three police officers, threw pieces of rope to them and worked to pull them to safety.

Julius A. Ortenzo
Prescott, Ariz.

A retired construction consultant, 68-year-old Julius A. Ortenzo, was inside a car on a remote highway in Ash Fork, Ariz., when he witnessed an SUV on fire after a violent collision with another vehicle on Aug. 30, 2018. Stopping nearby, Ortenzo heard children in the vehicle screaming for help. He ran to a backdoor, where he pulled 6-year-old Ava Castelhana through the window opening. Despite rapidly spreading flames and intense heat, Ortenzo then removed Axel Castelhana, a 5-month-old boy, and Addison Castelhana, 9. Aided by another motorist, they guided the children to safety. Ortenzo then saw the children's mother, 31-year-old Rebecca Castelhana, crawling toward the driver's window opening from the front, passenger seat. He returned to the car and helped her out of the window. An effort was made to remove the father of the family from the driver's seat, but it was not successful. The vehicle was shortly engulfed and the father and one child, a 3-year-old girl, perished. The mother and surviving children all recovered. Ortenzo was treated at a medical center for abrasions on an arm and both knees. He also sustained burns to fingertips on both hands.

Dylan M. Goetsch
Christopher W. Schmoker
Sturgis, S.D.

After arriving at the scene of a burning Sturgis, S.D., house May 12, 2018, and learning that 47-year-old Jason R. McKee was still inside, police Officer Dylan M. Goetsch, 27, and Sgt. Christopher W. Schmoker, 37, entered the home. Filled with dense smoke and visible flames in the kitchen, Goetsch and Schmoker moved to the home's upper level where Goetsch went to his hands and knees, crawled to a bedroom, and searched it for McKee, who was not there. Goetsch retraced his steps and returned to the home's front door before returning upstairs to search another bedroom. Dense smoke made it impossible for Goetsch to see more than a few feet in front of him. He exited the house and from the exterior, he climbed a ladder that was below McKee's bedroom window. At the window opening, he heard McKee breathing. After confirming his location, Goetsch returned to the front door where he and Schmoker re-entered the house – this time with wet T-shirts over their mouths and noses. They ran to McKee's bedroom and, with difficulty, dragged him from the house as flames spread to the ceiling above them. McKee was hospitalized for smoke inhalation and inhalation burns to his lungs. Goetsch and Schmoker sustained minor smoke inhalation; they recovered.

Philip L. Hall
Albuquerque, N.M.

Home remodeler Philip L. Hall, 22, was inside his apartment April 29, 2018, when he heard his neighbor scream for help and saw her 2-year-old great grandson, Kierre Caldwell-Smith, trapped between a burning tent and a fence. Wearing only shorts, Hall exited his first-floor window and quickly scaled two 6-foot, chain-link fences. With his course blocked by growing and spreading flames, Hall then scaled two more fences to bring himself closer to Kierre, albeit on the opposite side of another 6-foot, chain-link fence. While standing on debris near the fence and pulling the top of the fence toward him, Hall reached over the fence and grasped Kierre's arm. Hall then lost his grip and Kierre fell back into the flames. Hall leaned over the fence farther, extending his upper body into the flames to grasp the boy and lift him over the fence and carry him to safety. Kierre suffered severe burns to 55 percent of his body and was hospitalized for nearly three months. He continues to recover. Hall was hospitalized and underwent rehabilitation for nearly four months for treatment of second- and third-degree burns to more than 55 percent of his body. He recovered.

Daniel Simonelli
San Diego

After entering the Pacific Ocean from a beach in a cove in the early morning of Jan. 10, a man struggled to swim as high, surging waves washed him toward a rocky bluff in La Jolla, Calif. Daniel Simonelli, 53, swim coach, saw the man in distress. As a bystander called 911, Simonelli removed his outer clothing and entered the 60-degree water, wearing swim fins. Navigating large, frequent waves, Simonelli grasped the man and guided him to a point away from the rocks. Simonelli stayed with the man, and arriving lifeguards took the man to the shore via personal watercraft. Simonelli returned to the beach without assistance. Simonelli was not injured.

Christopher E. Lawless
North Sydney, N.S.

Krista E. Grosskleg, 40, was wading with her daughter in the Gulf of St. Lawrence at a public beach July 22, 2017, in Inverness, N.S. The pair lost their footing and were carried into deeper water by a rip current. High winds and large waves hampered their return to shore. Grosskleg's husband entered the water, swam to them, and took their daughter from his wife, as Grosskleg was carried farther out. Christopher E. Lawless, a 41-year-old manager, entered the water with a boogie board, which he gave to the husband and daughter. He then swam to Grosskleg, who was floating on her back and barely conscious at a point 300 feet from shore. Lawless grasped Grosskleg and towed her to shore, a lifeguard and others assisting once they reached wadable water. Another lifeguard assisted the husband and daughter to safety. Grosskleg was hospitalized for pneumonia and extreme exhaustion; she recovered. Lawless was not injured.

Zachary Salce
Maddison Henslin
Lompoc, Calif.

Neighbors Zachary Salce, 24, sheriff's department custody deputy, and Maddison Henslin, 21, animal welfare specialist, responded to a burning apartment located below theirs Nov. 13, 2018. Salce kicked open the front door, and they both entered, crawling under heavy smoke and flames. They found the woman, who was unconscious, lying on the floor, about 15 feet from the front door. Salce grasped the woman's upper body, and Henslin grasped her feet. Together, they dragged the woman to the front door and outside, where they were met by first-responders who took the woman away from the building to safety. She was taken to a hospital for treatment of smoke inhalation and burns.

Danny Lee Tiger
Ada, Okla.

Danny Lee Tiger, a 46-year-old administrator, saved Nathan P. Nolen, 43, from a burning truck after a head-on collision with another vehicle on a rural highway the night of June 26, in Ada. At home, Tiger heard the crash and drove to the accident scene. Unable to open the driver's door, Tiger gripped the top of the damaged door at a gap and bent it downward until he created an opening large enough to extend his arms inside to grasp Nolen's arms and head. Flames burned against the windshield as Tiger pulled Nolen through the opening. Despite hearing a small explosion at the truck's front end, Tiger continued to pull Nolen until he was fully free and fell to the pavement outside. Tiger dragged Nolen away from the truck. A medical helicopter flew Nolen to a hospital for treatment of serious leg injuries, but he was not burned.