

HONORING EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE

THE LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION



VALOR

2017 AWARDS LUNCHEON

PRESENTED BY MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS FOUNDATION

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2017

THE WESTIN BONAVENTURE HOTEL & SUITES / CALIFORNIA BALLROOM



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THE LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION



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2017 AWARDS LUNCHEON



PRESENTED BY MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS FOUNDATION

WELCOME

Robert Kovacic
Master of Ceremonies

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

Color Guard
Los Angeles Fire Department

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Firefighter Dennis Rodriguez

INVOCATION

Chaplain Rick Godinez

REMARKS

Fire Chief Ralph Terrazas

Andrew Kane, Chairman
Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation

————— **LUNCH** —————

REMARKS

Mayor Eric Garcetti

AWARDS PRESENTATION

Fire Chief Ralph Terrazas

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION 2017 AWARDS LUNCHEON

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ERIC GARCETTI
MAYOR

FIRE DEPARTMENT

RALPH M. TERRAZAS
FIRE CHIEF

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LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

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[HTTP://WWW.LAFD.ORG](http://www.lafd.org)

November 2, 2017



On a daily basis, the members of the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) demonstrate courage, commitment to duty, and self-sacrifice, qualities that have been the hallmark of the LAFD since its creation in 1886. On behalf of the entire LAFD, I express our gratitude to all of our Medal of Merit and Special Commendation recipients who selflessly risked their lives for the protection of life and property for the citizens of Los Angeles.

The LAFD has traditionally been recognized as the nation's leader in the Fire Service. As such, the men and women of our Department continue to uphold this commitment by inherently responding to the steady stream of risks and dangers that challenge our profession.

Today you will hear the individual accounts of our Medals of Merit and Special Commendation recipients, and how they demonstrated bravery that was clearly above and beyond the call of duty and without personal regard for their own safety. These courageous seven individuals exemplify the finest that the Fire Service has to offer. The LAFD Medal of Valor and Medals of Merit awards ceremony is our humble way of recognizing these members for serving with Courage, Integrity, and Pride.

Congratulations to all of our honorees.


RALPH M. TERRAZAS
Fire Chief





ERIC GARCETTI
MAYOR



November 2, 2017

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate and salute today's honorees, as we celebrate the heroism displayed by the men and women of the Los Angeles Fire Department. I also want to thank the Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation for providing a platform for us to recognize these exceptional individuals.

Today, we honor the courage and valor they show every day, and the memory of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in their commitment to keeping the City and people of Los Angeles safe. This year, we also honor those who employ exceptional tactics and sound judgment, beyond the normal demands of duty, to preserve life and property, promote public safety, and foster economic growth.

I am grateful for the commitment and bravery of today's recipients of the Medal of Valor, Medal of Merit, Special Recognition, Community Service, Lifetime Achievement, and Corporate Responsibility awards. These awards represent acts of extreme courage, dedication, and passion and we are truly privileged to count today's honorees among our own.

Best wishes and thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Garcetti'.

ERIC GARCETTI
Mayor

ABOUT THE LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION



The mission of the Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation is to support the LAFD in protecting life, property, and the environment by providing essential equipment, training, and public outreach programs to supplement city resources.

Founded in 2010, the LAFD Foundation has funded more than \$5 million in grants to the LAFD. The Foundation is led by a 20-member board of directors, business leaders, and community activists who volunteer their time and give generously to support the LAFD.

We are proud to have provided

- High-tech flashlights for every member of the department as an ongoing commitment to the safety and well-being of LAFD members.
- Continuing support, thanks to the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, for the Advance Practitioner Response Unit (APRU), which includes medical supplies and equipment for the unit and transportation vouchers for the patients.
- With a grant from the W.M. Keck Foundation, funding for an evaluation of the APRU in terms of patient satisfaction and cost-saving to hospitals and the fire department.
- Funding for four LAFD high school firefighter magnet schools at Banning, Dorsey, Monroe, and Wilson High Schools. This program is supported through the generosity of the Motorola Solutions Foundation.
- Thanks to the Wasserman Foundation, funding of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) to enhance situational awareness in major incidents including fires, search operations, technical rescues, and hazardous materials incidents.
- Funding for LAFD Girls Camps, which engage female high school students in skills training to interest them in fire service. From use of chain saws to tourniquets, from climbing ladders to giving CPR, the participants have fun while becoming more confident.



LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION 2017 AWARDS LUNCHEON

- Funding for the LAFD Leadership Academy, a behavioral science program designed to make participants better leaders and team members. Many graduates report that this program is life-changing, enhancing their communication skills.
- With support from NBCUniversal, donation of canopies to provide shade and shelter at base camp during the La Tuna Fire.
- Funding for the first Cadet Academy, the Cadet Muster, youth FIRE Academies, and various Cadet posts.
- Support for ceremonies, including LAFD 9/11 Memorial, LAFD Historical Society Memorial Ceremony, recruit graduations, and Safe Summer Tip-Off.
- iPads for Fire Prevention Bureau and Air Operations.
- Specialized software for the LAFD Behavioral Health unit.
- Adopt-a-Fire-Station grants to individual fire stations and specialized units, providing ice machines, washer/dryers, gym equipment, barbecue grills and smokers, hand tools and tool chests, kitchen equipment, pressure washers, and much more. Firefighters and paramedics live in their stations on 24-hour shifts. We are committed to providing first responders a good quality of life so they can perform their duties safely and efficiently.



LAFDF Board and guests at Fahrenheit 2017

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION STAFF

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OUR EMCEE

ROBERT KOVACIK



Robert Kovacik is an anchor and general assignment reporter for NBC4 Southern California. He can be seen on the weekday evening newscasts at 5 p.m., 6 p.m., and 11 p.m.

Kovacik is known for bringing viewers a local perspective and in-depth coverage to international and national events. He has reported from around the world including from Las Vegas to cover the worst mass shooting in the United States; Manchester, England during the aftermath of the terrorist bombing attack in 2017; and from Orlando, Florida, when a gunman opened fire in a night club in 2016. He also covered the Republican Convention in Cleveland, the near collapse of the Oroville Dam in Northern California, and the 19 fallen firefighters of Prescott, Arizona.

He was NBC4's correspondent for the 2013 Papal Conclave in Rome and the year before was assigned to the Summer Olympics in London; he was later honored by the British Consul-General of Los Angeles for his reporting of the Games. Kovacik also earned Emmy Awards for both international assignments, in Great Britain and Italy.

One of his most compelling live shots occurred right here in Southern California covering an extensive manhunt for an alleged murderer. The suspect suddenly appeared and surrendered to Kovacik while live on the air. His coverage of the event was recognized with an Edward R. Murrow Award, a Golden Mike, and a Los Angeles Press Club Award for breaking and spot news reporting. His reporting on the investigation surrounding President Clinton's impeachment was included in the Kenneth Starr Report, and his groundbreaking exposé into overcrowded LA animal shelters helped force the city to change its laws.

Over the course of his career, Kovacik has been recognized with several industry accolades, including multiple Emmy, Golden Mike, AP, and Murrow Awards. He was named Television Journalist of the Year in 2013 at the 55th Annual Southern California Journalism Awards. He is currently serving his third consecutive term as President of the Los Angeles Press Club, elected by his peers.

Early in his career, Kovacik became the youngest anchor in the nation's largest television market, New York City, when he was named anchor of KCET's overnight venture, "Nightworld." He is passionate about causes that impact Southern Californians and participates regularly in community events throughout the region. Kovacik is an avid supporter of animal-related causes and helps to raise awareness about the well-being of animals and the importance of pet adoption.

Kovacik is an honors graduate of Brown University and Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, where he also graduated with honors.



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LAFD BOARD OF HONORARY AWARDS

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MEDAL OF VALOR

The Medal of Valor is awarded to sworn personnel who have demonstrated bravery at great personal risk to their own lives, beyond a doubt and clearly above the call of duty, whether on- or off-duty.

MEDAL OF MERIT

The Medal of Merit is awarded to sworn personnel who distinguish themselves by performing an act where the individual's actions, if not taken, would have resulted in serious injury or present imminent danger to life. The individual must have demonstrated a conspicuous act of bravery with calculated personal risk to his or her own life.

LETTER OF SPECIAL COMMENDATION

A Letter of Special Commendation is awarded to department members who perform an act requiring initiative and/or ability worthy of recognition during emergency or non-emergency conditions.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Lifetime Achievement Award is presented to a retiree of the department who exemplifies the true spirit of "Service to the Community" through his or her actions while on active duty and as a retired member.

CRYSTAL FLAME COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

The Crystal Flame Community Service Award is presented to a sworn member of the department who has gone beyond his or her regular duties, demonstrating exceptional compassion and personal commitment to the community.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AWARD

The Corporate Responsibility Award is presented to a company that prepares its employees with policies, training, and drills so they may care for one another, their clients, and guests in the event of emergencies or disasters.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

CAPTAIN (RET.) ANDREW KULJIS



For 60 years, Andy Kuljis has been in service to the LAFD and the city of Los Angeles. Born in Long Beach to Yugoslavian immigrants, he grew up in San Pedro, serving on a submarine during the Korean War. Back home, after passing both the LAPD and LAFD exams, he opted for fire service because he remembered the firefighters at his local fire station, where he once delivered newspapers.

In 1957, after graduating from the LAFD Academy, Kuljis received his first probationary assignment. With legendary Captain “Big Frank” Brown as his first mentor, the new recruit worked at a series of busy fire stations, fought a wide variety of fires, and gained immeasurable experience. “I was sure I had died and gone to Heaven,” he remembers.

Over time, in addition to serving at many of the city’s busiest stations, Kuljis had the opportunity to learn about communications and dispatch while working at OCD (now Metro Fire Communications).

Serving at FS 78, he formed an Explorer program, which eventually had more than 80 participants, many of whom went on to become firefighters and paramedics at various departments.

Early in his career, Kuljis became involved with United Firefighters of Los Angeles City, serving on the union’s negotiating team and advancing through various offices until he was elected president — a full-time job. While at UFLAC, he worked with an actuary, went to school to learn more about actuarial work, and designed the UFLAC dental plan, which has endured for more than 30 years.

In his off-hours, he also taught fire science courses at Harbor College and Santa Ana City College. Following his final assignment at FS 49, he retired in 1988 after nearly 31 years with the LAFD.

Following his work in the department, Kuljis worked on movie sets and locations as a fire safety officer; he also worked at a car dealership, where he specialized in selling trucks to firefighters. He taught welding to many firefighters, and his background as a certified welder led to the creation of an aftermarket company that makes automobile accessories and does body and fender work.

Eleven years ago, when the Los Angeles Firemen’s Relief Association sought a secretary-treasurer, Kuljis volunteered to help until they found a permanent candidate. He still works at LAFRA today, dispensing advice, making funeral arrangements, and caring for firefighters and the extended fire family. At LAFRA, he is beloved for his wisdom and the care he bestows on members seeking assistance.

With Marjie, his beloved wife of 62 years, Kuljis had three children, including a daughter who passed away in 1998 and whose three children he and Marjie raised. They have eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

For his long and dedicated career with the LAFD, we honor Captain Kuljis with the Lifetime Achievement Award. A mentor to many firefighters, he has served Los Angeles with compassion and commitment, and continues to be of service to communities across the city.

CRYSTAL FLAME COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

CAPTAIN GREGORY HARVEY & FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDIC CORY MCDANIEL



Located at 7th and St. Julian Streets in L.A.'s Skid Row district and flanked by encampments of homeless people in all directions, LAFD Fire Station 9 is one of the city's busiest. For its first responders, 80 calls a day is normal. For Captain Gregory Harvey and Firefighter/Paramedic Cory McDaniel, who were assigned to Station 9 in 2016, responding to countless medical emergencies was all in a day's work.

Yet outside their "office," as they call it, Harvey and McDaniel are both family men living oddly parallel lives. They reside approximately 100 yards away from one another; they're both married with three young daughters — all under the age of 10 — who go to school together, play together, and await their fathers' return together. And it's these girls who inspired Harvey and McDaniel to launch a battalion-wide school supply drive in 2016. The idea for the drive was conceived in late June of that year, when the two dads were discussing their daughters' return to school in the fall. As they chatted about their own children, they began to wonder: How do the children of the Skid Row area prepare for their academic year? Without parents who can afford their basic needs, how do they ready themselves for the year to come?

With these questions in mind, Harvey and McDaniel set out to start a school-supply drive benefiting the Union Rescue Mission — the only mission in Skid Row that houses children and families. They raised the idea throughout the ranks of the LAFD, spreading the fundraiser throughout the battalion. Collection boxes were placed at each station, with LAFD members contributing the supplies themselves. In its first year, the drive was a success, raising nearly \$1,000 in supplies. Harvey and McDaniel hope to make the drive an annual event, one that will someday spread department-wide, serving underprivileged children in all parts of the city.

According to McDaniel, he and Harvey "wanted to get the kids excited about school because that's what will get them out of Skid Row." For these two firefighters living parallel lives in this struggling neighborhood, being of service means more than just the normal responsibilities of an LAFD paramedic: It means watching out for everyone.

Gregg Harvey has been promoted to Captain, and Cory McDaniel is now an Emergency Incident Technician and listed for promotion to Captain. Though the two no longer serve at the same fire station, they remain committed to helping the city's most vulnerable children. Their willingness to go beyond their day-to-day jobs has earned them the Crystal Flame Community Service Award.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AWARD



Los Angeles is home to the West Coast headquarters of NBCUniversal, one of the world's leading media and entertainment companies, owned by the Comcast Corporation. More than 12,000 people a day enter the gates of Universal Studios to work at one of the businesses headquartered there, including the entertainment television network, motion picture company, television productions, one of the world's largest working television and movie studios with postproduction services, and theme park. Millions of tourists and guests visit Universal Studios Hollywood and CityWalk each year.

We salute NBCUniversal for their commitment to social responsibility and philanthropy. They are active members of the community and partner with the communities surrounding them by giving back, which is part of the company's core values.

NBCUniversal understands the importance of safety and preparedness. The company's Emergency Services department has a comprehensive emergency response training program for employees. In addition, the Security and Business Continuity departments are continuously assessing risks, strengthening plans, and investing in Universal City's emergency preparedness resources. Currently, Fire Station 51 on the lot is under expansion and a Tiller Quint ladder truck has been purchased to serve the nearly 400-acre property and the broader community.

In 2010, NBCUniversal provided the original seed money for the LAFD Foundation. Since its original gift, NBCU has also created a community room named for former City Councilmember Tom LaBonge at Fire Station 76, provided canopies for shade and shelter for the La Tuna Fire command center, and donated food to feed the crews fighting that fire. They have also sponsored many LAFD Foundation events, where NBC Southern California talent have often served as masters of ceremony.

The LAFD Foundation is honored to have NBCUniversal as our corporate partner, and we salute them as an exemplary responsible corporate citizen.

FIRE CHIEF'S SILVER CIVILIAN AWARD

DOCTOR MARC ECKSTEIN



CONFINED SPACE PHYSICAL RESCUE

Alhambra Foundry is a metal works and fabricator that has been in business since 1923. On August 28, 2017, the Alhambra Fire Department was dispatched there for a reported hand injury. The incident was quickly upgraded to a rescue. A worker who had been standing in a coal hopper was pulled into the bottom feed screw auger assembly when the power was turned back on while he was inside. The action pulled the worker's legs into the auger up to his knees. The first arriving battalion chief requested the Hospital Emergency Response Team (HERT), which includes a trauma surgeon, an emergency room resident, and an emergency room nurse. That day it also included Dr. Marc Eckstein, Commander of the LAFD Bureau of Emergency Medicine.

Initial efforts to reverse the auger to release the victim's legs were unsuccessful. Thus, Dr. Eckstein climbed inside of the cramped space along with another HERT member and started the patient on medication via IV drip. With temperatures in the high nineties, no light, and coal dust, Dr. Eckstein donned a mask, a helmet, and a flashlight so he could assess the patient. While reaching across the patient, with very limited space to move, and maintaining his balance with his legs and feet against the walls, he began to attempt freeing the patients' legs. This was unsuccessful.

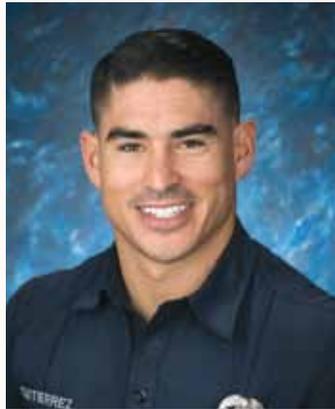
Dr. Eckstein and another member of the HERT unit began cutting around the calf muscle of the patient's leg with surgical scissors, exposing the lower extremity, which they hadn't been able to see. Unable to release the patient's trapped legs, Dr. Eckstein decided to perform a double amputation of the patient's legs in order to save his life. At this point Dr. Eckstein was exhausted and approaching dehydration. He requested a reciprocating saw and tourniquets.

It was difficult to tighten the tourniquets. While working in the coal dust atmosphere in the pitch black hopper, endangering his own health and safety, Dr. Eckstein began amputation of the first leg. The patient was bleeding and needed continuous IV medication. Dr. Eckstein amputated the second leg at the knee. The patient was pulled from the hopper and transported immediately with HERT members to a hospital where he received surgery. He survived the ordeal, and is now being fitted for prosthetics.

Dr. Eckstein was evaluated when he exited the hopper. He was on the verge of dehydration and heat exposure. Fortunately, he was able to hydrate on-scene. The Incident Commander stated that Dr. Eckstein performed the life-saving measures with extreme risk to his own life and safety. He and the other HERT members selflessly saved a life.

MEDAL OF MERIT

FIREFIGHTER BRYCE GUTIERREZ



RESCUE OF FOUR CHILDREN

On January 16, 2017, Task Force 33 responded to a structure fire at a bungalow in South Central Los Angeles. Though TF33 had received no initial reports of people trapped in the house, Firefighter Bryce Gutierrez, while conducting forcible entry onto the property, heard screams coming from inside. At that moment, the captain in charge confirmed that four children, ages two, three, five, and seven, were still in the house.

Locked security gates blocked the front entrance, so Gutierrez circled the property and found a rear-bedroom window—the only point of entry not yet consumed by flames.

Quickly he hoisted himself through the window into complete darkness, with thick smoke and zero visibility. Hearing muffled noises in the distance, he called out, but received no response. He then dropped to the ground and, crawling on all fours, began to search for the children.

Amidst the smoke and flames, he found each child, one at a time. Each one had gone unconscious, and as he came across each limp figure, Gutierrez, not knowing whether they were dead or alive, carried them quickly back to the window, passing each body to a waiting firefighter on the other side. He completed these motions until all four children were rescued.

The four children are alive today because of the courageous actions taken by Firefighter Gutierrez. We salute him for his exceptional service.

MEDAL OF MERIT

FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDIC ANDREW GUZZARD



OFF-DUTY RESCUE OF CHILD

On January 21, 2017, Firefighter/Paramedic Andrew Guzzard was on vacation with his family and friends in Big Bear, CA, which was experiencing a heavy snowstorm.

During a break in the weather, Guzzard ventured outside with his wife, son, and other families to go sledding down a hill near Big Bear Lake. The snow had created a 10-foot snow mound at the bottom of the hill, which served as a stopping point for those enjoying their sled rides.

At a moment in the otherwise beautiful day, Guzzard heard sudden screams, turning to find a panic-stricken father whose three-year-old son had just disappeared over the wall of snow.

As the boy's father raced downhill, Guzzard's group followed. To their distress they discovered the child stranded on his toboggan, 75 feet from shore on the frozen lake. Fraught with panic, the boy's father attempted to step out onto the fragile ice, putting his own life at risk in his attempt to save his child.

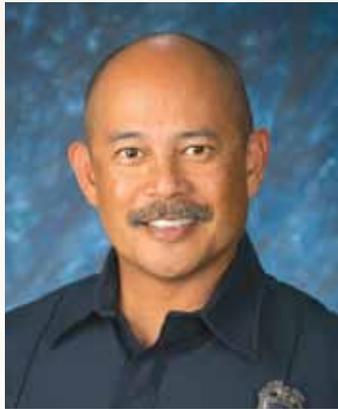
Recognizing the urgency of the situation, Guzzard grabbed an inner tube from a nearby child and, lying on his stomach, slid out onto the ice. Moving carefully, he used the tips of his toes to propel himself toward the trapped and terrified little boy.

Guzzard called to the child to stay put and, upon reaching him, swiftly maneuvered him onto the inner tube. He then used his toes to steer them back to shore, the ice cracking and breaking beneath them all the while.

The young boy is alive today because of Guzzard's calm, quick thinking during a stressful situation. We salute him for his actions.

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDIC JOAQUIN LAPASTORA
AND FIREFIGHTER JAMES EBERLE



RESCUE OF JUMPER

On July 13, 2017, after responding to a false fire alarm at an apartment complex in San Pedro, the members of Engine 36 were preparing to exit the building when Captain Richard Diaz noticed a middle-aged woman attempting to climb over the railing of a third-floor balcony in an adjacent apartment complex, presumably with the intention of jumping off.

Captain Diaz immediately sent Firefighter/Paramedic Joaquin Lapastora and Firefighter James Eberle to the woman's apartment in hopes of preventing her from jumping. About that time, Captain Diaz saw two civilians appear on the balcony in an attempt to help the woman—who by this time was on the opposite side of the railing and holding on to it—by talking to her and trying to get her back over, but were unsuccessful.

Lapastora and Eberle moved as quickly as possible, entering the building, finding the apartment, and bursting onto the balcony just moments before the woman let go of the railing and attempted to jump. Racing to the balcony's edge, the two firefighters caught her by her arms and legs and were able to prevent her fall, pulling her back over the railing and safely onto the floor of the apartment. Assessed by members of RA36, she received only minor scratches and bruises as a result.

Recognizing the direness of the situation and moving with extreme urgency, Firefighter Eberle and Firefighter/Paramedic Lapastora demonstrated exemplary action at extreme risk to their own personal safety, thinking and acting quickly to save the woman's life.

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

ENGINEER JAMES MARTIN AND ENGINEER KAMERON CARLIS



RESCUE OF JUMPER

On May 11, 2017, the LAFD was dispatched to a potential jumper on Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks. Upon arrival, they found a woman sitting on the parapet of the 22-story City National Bank building — a potential fall of approximately 300 feet. From below, she appeared agitated, shifting her position frequently, her legs visible as they dangled over the edge of the high-rise.

Because air bags are effective only for jumpers from 10 stories or less, emergency teams quickly moved to the roof of the building. Working with members of the LAPD and relying heavily on their own instincts and skills, Engineers Kameron Carlis and James Martin took swift action and were able to capture the woman and bring her to safety.

Both Martin and Carlis were secured with Urban Search and Rescue harnesses and, assisted by two LAPD officers, began to approach the agitated woman from two sides. Distraught, she repeatedly warned all four men to back up, and Carlis and Martin were able to calm her by taking up slack in their ropes so as to appear they were complying with her request. Everyone believed she was sincere in her threat to jump.

While one LAPD officer negotiated with the woman, Engineer Martin, who was positioned closest to her, continued to present himself in a nonthreatening way. The distractions of the negotiations, combined with Martin's actions, allowed Carlis and the other officer to move within five feet of her.

At a decisive moment, Engineer Carlis abruptly crossed to the woman and quickly embraced her in both arms before she was able to jump. With the help of the LAPD officer, Carlis was able to pull her down from the ledge and safely onto the roof of the building.

The event was broadcast live on local news stations and played out before a large crowd gathered at the intersection below. Engineer Carlis' and Engineer Martin's decisive actions to rescue the woman clearly saved her life and — because "copycat" suicides are often spurred by publicity — may have saved others as well.

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

CAPTAIN/PARAMEDIC JOHN MARASCO



OFF-DUTY RESCUE OF MOTHER AND CHILDREN

On June 11, 2016, Captain John Marasco was tubing down the Salt River near Phoenix, AZ, with his wife and friends. Part of a flotilla traveling together, the group had floated downriver for several hours and were approaching the landing area, where they planned to catch a bus that would return them to their starting point.

The group was floating near the opposite shore when they heard shouts. Marasco turned and saw one of his friends scrambling to help a small boy about five years old, who was not part of their group, get back onto his inner tube. Beyond, he saw that a group of tubes tied together had flipped, with two girls in their early teens clinging to the tubes as well as a very large woman—who would turn out to be the children's mother—struggling in the fast-moving water.

The woman was clearly drowning, so Marasco slipped from his own tube and swam to the family. He approached their mother first, who in her panic was clinging to her young son and pulling him under. Marasco caught hold of her and rolled her head out of the water, and she went limp. Her son was screaming, but Marasco was able to push him onto a tube, gripping him and his mother and trying to keep all three of them above water.

While lifting their mother's head, supporting her body as well as the boy's, he called for the girls to hold their tubes tightly and, with occasional kicks and river-bottom footing, was able to propel himself and the family slowly across the river and into waist-deep water. With the help of his friends, Marasco pulled them all onshore.

At that point, Marasco identified himself as a firefighter/paramedic. He examined all four family members, who were grateful but clearly in shock and recovering. In speaking with them, he learned that the woman and her children had little or no swimming experience and hadn't realized how dangerous the river could be.

Because of his quick thinking and fast action, as well as his skills in water rescue, Captain Marasco very likely saved the lives of several members of one family, and successfully kept tragedy from marring a summer day's activity.

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

FIREFIGHTER KENNETH FRASER



OFF-DUTY RESCUE OF JUMPER

On January 24, 2017, probationary Firefighter Kenneth Fraser was off-duty, heading home from the LAFD's Geographic Information System (GIS) Unit where he had been training. He was exiting the 101 Freeway at Hollywood Boulevard when he saw a middle-aged man on the overpass ledge, who appeared to be planning to jump.

Though he had been on the job less than six months, Fraser instinctively switched to first-responder mode. He pulled his car over, shouted for someone to call 9-1-1, and attempted to clear the crowd that had gathered around the jumper.

By now, the agitated man was already over the gate and on the ledge, legs dangling below him. Though the man resisted Fraser's advances, telling him to back away, Fraser persisted, convinced that if he could get the man talking, it would keep him from jumping.

Minutes into their conversation, the LAPD arrived, sirens blaring. Their dramatic entrance seemed to spook the man, who recoiled and again told Fraser to back away. Speaking with the officers, Fraser made it clear he had already established a rapport with the man. Convinced, the officers gave him the all-clear to continue.

When Fraser returned, he adopted a new approach. He asked the man if Fraser could trust him, rather than vice-versa. Once he assured Fraser he was trustworthy, Fraser proceeded to disclose details of his difficult upbringing—details he had not shared with others. He spoke genuinely and from the heart, sharing intimate details about the passing of his father and much more. Only once he concluded his own story, did Fraser ask if the man returned his trust.

Ultimately, the new firefighter was able to reveal his own perseverance through hardship to create a genuine connection with the jumper. After over an hour of talking and negotiating, he was able to convince the man to climb back over the ledge. By that point, the man had begun to lose his grip, and expressed fear that he was going to fall. Fraser shouted for the LAFD, who cut the fence and pulled the man to safety.

To this day, Fraser regularly thinks about the man and worries about his well-being. "If I help someone today, but not tomorrow," he says, "then my job's not finished."

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDIC CHRISTOPHER KUZMICZ



SHARK ATTACK RESCUE

In January of 2017, Firefighter/Paramedic Christopher Kuzmicz traveled to Papua New Guinea for a 14-day dive trip in the Coral Sea. On January 21, ten days into the excursion, Kuzmicz experienced an “eerie feeling” that caused him to return to his boat only 45 minutes into the dive of the day.

As Kuzmicz approached the ship, he signaled to the crew on board that he needed a lift. While the crew prepared the Zodiac that was to pick him up, Kuzmicz heard a piercing shriek. In a matter of seconds, the inflatable boat shot toward the screams and Kuzmicz swam toward the ship to drop off his diving gear. He then propelled himself to the Zodiac, only to find the diving boat’s captain, Craig de Wit, bleeding severely from a bull shark attack to his left arm and torso.

Kuzmicz immediately took control of the situation. He carried de Wit to the vessel, assessed his injuries, and began applying pressure to the deep wounds. He put all deck hands to work collecting onboard medications and medical equipment, alerting the other divers, and notifying the Divers Alert Network that they were in desperate need of assistance.

As de Wit faded in and out of consciousness from his loss of blood, Kuzmicz created makeshift tourniquets to stop the bleeding. He cleaned de Wit’s gashes and gathered his medical history, oxygen levels, and diver’s profile so de Wit would be ready for surgery once they reached shore—six hours away. Due to a storm, the helicopter scheduled to rescue de Wit was delayed another three hours. In total, nine hours passed between the attack and de Wit’s transport to a hospital.

Nearly a year later, de Wit is now on the road to recovery, with a chance at regaining full function of his limbs. He attributes this to Kuzmicz’s “exemplary service in providing first aid.” It was de Wit who recommended Kuzmicz for today’s recognition, calling him “a credit to the Los Angeles Fire Department.”

“I was fortunate,” de Wit said, “to have one of L.A.’s finest aboard on this trip.”

With gratitude . . .

The Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation is grateful to all those who helped produce today's event. It is our honor to work with the men and women of the Los Angeles City Fire Department and to create a meaningful event for them. We are grateful for their committed service to the safety of all the communities of Los Angeles, and especially for the heroism and dedication of today's honorees.

Captain Erik Scott of the LAFD has been the vital link between the department and the Foundation for this event. His extraordinary level of organization and advance planning have made the event run smoothly from planning to implementation. We also rely all year on our liaison, Deputy Chief Graham Everett, for his knowledge, his quick responses, and his great humor.

Our professional event team is involved from planning to clean-up. Thanks to Your Great Event, Elizabeth MacFarland Graphic Design, Val Eule of Just Flowers, and the wonderful banquet and catering team at the Westin Bonaventure. They are all devoted to creating an event worthy of the LAFD.

Special thanks to Goodnight and Co. for the spectacular set they created for this year's event.

Finn Partners provides our lovely office home as well as public relations and media support. Thanks to Nathan Rillo, Rebecca Sitorus, Melissa England, and Emmy Villacorte for their continuing support and hard work on our behalf.



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When our communities feel safe and secure, citizens are free to create, innovate and celebrate. As a global leader in mission critical communications, we're helping people be the best in the moments that matter. Thank you to the brave professionals at the Los Angeles Fire Department for your selfless and dedicated service to our community.