

## VALOR & COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS



*Firehouse is pleased to announce the honorees in the 2023 Firehouse Magazine Valor Awards. The honorees displayed great bravery in the face of dangerous conditions.*

**T**he Michael O. McNamee Award of Valor reflects a larger mission about what it means to be brave in the face of danger, as the award is named after Worcester, MA, Fire Department District Chief (Ret.) Mike McNamee, who displayed great courage at the Worcester Cold Storage Warehouse Fire in December 1999, when he made the bold decision to stop additional Worcester firefighters from entering the building when there already were six lost inside.





## Grand Prize Winner

### **FIREFIGHTER PETROS MESTHENEAS** **FREEPORT, NY, FIRE DEPARTMENT**

On April 1, 2023, the Freeport Fire Department was alerted for an automatic in a 30,000-sq.-ft. building that housed an ambulance company, with a backup call reporting a vehicle on fire inside of the structure. Firefighters found smoke showing and took an attack line into the structure while two firefighters began search efforts with reports of workers still inside. The two became disoriented when conditions deteriorated rapidly. A mayday was called by the first firefighter, but the rapid intervention team wasn't on scene. Firefighter Petros Mestheneas entered the building and began to search when the second member called a mayday and the low-air alarm was audible in the radio transmission. As Mestheneas searched the building alone, conditions worsened, including multiple explosions. Through the commotion, he heard banging and began to move toward the noise. As he continued to search, he located one firefighter, who was about 57 feet from the entry door in a storage room. Mestheneas then quickly searched the area for the other member. He quickly found the second member in an adjacent bathroom as heavy fire conditions took over the building and created zero visibility and high heat conditions. Mestheneas retraced his entry route, leading the two firefighters—one whose SCBA now was empty—to the doorway. As they exited the building, the second firefighter's SCBA ran empty and the facepiece was stuck to his face.

PHOTO BY RAYMOND CHIOZZA

We would like to thank the following people for their assistance in selecting this year's recipients: Frank Becerra, firefighter (Ret.), Fort Worth, TX, Fire Department; Timothy Cowan, district chief, DeWitt, NY, Fire District; Ryan Pennington, captain, Charleston, WV, Fire Department; and Jared Renshaw, fire commissioner, Western Berks, PA, Fire Department.



## VALOR & COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

### JOSEPH C. BARBER

#### CLAYTON COUNTY, GA, FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

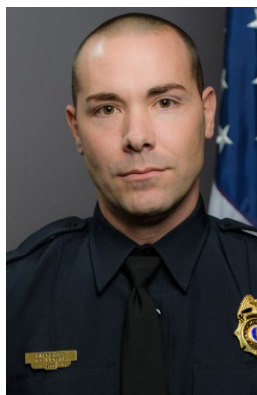
Sgt. Joseph C. Barber and Firefighter Trenton Boone were returning from a training assignment on March 15, 2023, when they observed a large column of smoke and diverted toward the source. While en route, a structure fire assignment was dispatched with a report of entrapment. An alarm for a structure fire with victim entrapment was dispatched over the radio as they neared the scene. Barber exited the vehicle, running through an opening in a six-foot wooden fence that separated two subdivisions. A battalion chief from another department met Barber and confirmed that a bedridden victim still was inside of the structure, which had fire and smoke showing. Without PPE, Barber entered the home to search for the victim as he passed through intense heat and heavy smoke conditions. He located a 350-lb. bedridden victim and began to drag the individual to the front door. The patient was handed over to Med 11 and BLS1 for transport to the hospital as Barber donned his PPE and initiated a primary search with Boone. The victim later was released from the hospital.



### ISAAC FRAZIER & DAVIN DOONAN

#### WICHITA, KS, FIRE DEPARTMENT

Rescue 1 arrived on May 3, 2023, to find heavy fire showing from an attached garage with heavy smoke showing from a single-story dwelling. Engine Co. 8 stretched the initial attack line, and Lt. Chris Wirths and Firefighter Jordon Haig from Rescue 1 entered the front door while the member who was assigned to outside vent, Firefighter Isaac Frazier, went to the rear of the structure. Frazier was met by the homeowner, who stated that his sister was trapped in the basement. Frazier forced open the back door and was met by heavy fire conditions. Getting low to the ground, he was able to see the stairs to the basement right inside of the door. Firefighter Davin Doonan, Truck Co. 6, met with Frazier, and they devised a rescue plan, with Frazier running through the fire and down the stairs. He encountered the woman, who was struggling to breathe as smoke conditions worsened. He radioed that he found the victim and called for a hoseline to protect the stairs as Doonan ran through the fire to the victim and Frazier. As the environment deteriorated, Doonan covered the woman with a blanket and, without a hoseline in place, told Frazier that there still was no hoseline. Doonan ascended the stairs and positioned himself between the heavy fire and landing. Frazier quickly brought the victim up the stairs and outside. The victim suffered minimal injuries and still was conscious when she was transferred to the ambulance crew.



ISAAC FRAZIER



DAVIN DOONAN



### JASON A. COURTNEY

#### DES MOINES, IA, FIRE DEPARTMENT

While en route to a Dec. 12, 2023, house fire, Des Moines firefighters were informed by a resident that he and his grandmother were trapped on the second floor as fire burned below them. E04 reported heavy fire from the rear of the two-story residential structure and began fire attack efforts as others used a ground ladder to rescue one victim. T01 began a primary search of the second floor, where the crew encountered zero-visibility conditions. Firefighter Jason A. Courtney could hear weak gasps of a woman who was calling for help and asked his officer to remain at the top of the stairs for orientation during the search. Despite dense smoke, Courtney located the victim, who had become unresponsive. Courtney then moved the victim more than 20 feet to the top of the stairs, where the officer helped him to remove the victim to the exterior. The victim who Courtney rescued was transported and listed in critical condition.



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### WILLIAM PERRY

#### COAL CITY, IL, FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

On June 6, 2023, William Perry was driving with his two children when he received a notification of structure fire in his neighborhood via phone. He drove to the house and secured his children in the car before opening the front door of the house, where he encountered heavy smoke conditions that created limited visibility. He called out, and a male responded, saying he was unable to evacuate the house on his own. Without fire companies on scene nor the protection of firefighter PPE, Perry followed the voice of the man, who was elderly, and was able to find him and bring him outside. It was then that the man told Perry that his wife still was inside the house. Perry returned inside to begin search efforts. As he entered, the conditions worsened, and Perry was unable to search for the woman.



### TREVOR GOOD

#### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FIRE AND EMS DEPARTMENT

Trevor Good was commuting to his Washington D.C. firehouse around 3 a.m. on Sept. 23, 2023, when he observed a vehicle overturned and on fire a distance from the travel lanes of Interstate 95 in Cecil County, MD. Good stopped and found the vehicle resting on its passenger side atop a steep embankment. He found that the driver had self-extricated. The engine compartment fire was spreading into the passenger area as Good, without any protective equipment, entered through a shattered sunroof to search the vehicle in heavy smoke. He located an 18-month-old child and an adult female trapped inside and was able to remove the child and place the individual safely away from the burning vehicle. With fire engulfing the passenger compartment, Good was able to go back through the sunroof, grab hold of the female, and drag her up and out of the sunroof and to safety. With both victims away from the vehicle, Good began CPR efforts on the toddler until EMS crews arrived.



### TANNER MOSHER

#### MAUI, HI, FIRE DEPARTMENT

Tanner Mosher was among the first resources to be deployed to wildland urban interface fires that devastated Maui on Aug. 8, 2023. He was working with the crews of three Type 1 engines, a wildland unit and a mini-pumper when both sides of the road blew up, covering the area with flames. The flames were being fanned by hurricane-force winds that blew horizontally across the road, which caused structures on both sides of the road to become engulfed in flames. Tanner jumped behind the wheel of the wildland truck and was able to get some members to safety, away from the intense fire conditions. He returned with a police vehicle and swiftly evacuated the remaining eight firefighters with the police car. Tanner's captain sustained serious burns to his knees during the fire and evacuation.

### Valor Award Honorable Mentions

#### JACOB ADAMSON

Wichita, KS, Fire Department

#### MANNY SHARP

Medford, OR, Fire Department

#### ANTHONY VERA

Hollywood, FL, Fire and Rescue Department

#### CAPT. TROY GERKEN & LT. (RET.) JASON FAGER

Wichita, KS, Fire Department

#### KEITH M. STILL

Manheim Township, PA, Fire Rescue





## UNIT CITATIONS

### ENGINE CO. 29, ENGINE CO. 52, SQUAD CO. 40, TRUCK CO. 12 AND TRUCK CO. 16, BALTIMORE CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT

At 3:39 p.m. on Oct. 19, 2023, Baltimore City firefighters were dispatched to a dwelling fire on Linden Heights Avenue. Engine Co. 29 found smoke showing from Side A and fire on Side C of a two-story, ordinary construction, occupied dwelling. At 3:49, a mayday was declared by Engine Co. 29 Capt. Dillon Rinaldo (detailed from Engine Co. 46). The Rapid Intervention Team, Engine Co. 52, was deployed as a second mayday was declared. At that point, conditions on Side A deteriorated with a

large volume of fire issuing from both floors. Members of Engine Co. 29, Engine Co. 52, Squad Co. 40, Truck Co. 12 and Truck Co. 16 worked valiantly in paralyzing heat and zero visibility to locate Rinaldo and Firefighter Rodney Pitts. Under worsening conditions, the members were extricated from the involved structure in 10 minutes. Immediate care was rendered, but Pitts died shortly after arrival at the hospital and Rinaldo succumbed to his injuries five days later.

### BATTALION 3, CHIEF 3, DISPATCH CENTER, FIRE MARSHALS 3 AND 5, MEDIC 32, MEDIC 46, AND STATIONS 30, 45 AND 46 JASPER COUNTY, SC, FIRE-RESCUE

While Jasper County Fire-Rescue crews were en route to a mobile home fire just after 11 p.m. on Oct. 12, 2023, they were told that a paralyzed woman was unable to exit the residence. Dispatchers could hear her barely breathing. Medic 46 arrived, reporting a working fire, and Lt. Justin Blankenship found an off-duty Hilton Head Island, SC, Fire Rescue firefighter on Side D attempting to locate the woman in challenging conditions. Engine 46 was given the order to get a line in service. Under

intense heat and no visibility, Blankenship located the victim behind the doorway, which required him to close the door to move the victim back, so the door could be opened to remove the victim. He then began to drag her out. He passed the victim over to his battalion chief and another firefighter just as the bedroom and kitchen area of the residence flashed over. After on-scene care, the victim was transported to the hospital, regaining consciousness in the ambulance.



## COMMUNITY SERVICE

### JAKE KREYLING, BEVERLY, MA, FIRE DEPARTMENT

During Capt. Jake Kreyling's time overseeing the Fire Prevention Unit, he overhauled the department's outreach efforts. During the process, he collaborated with multiple city departments to streamline vital communications and developed a strategy to ensure that internal and external stakeholders are on the same page. Kreyling attended programs at the National Fire Academy that served as a springboard to implement those strategies within his community, including battery storage system safety, obtaining and installing car seats for families who can't afford them and revamping all aspects of the public fire education program. In collaboration with the American Red Cross, he devised a program for the installation of smoke alarms and education for older populations. As chair of the Essex County Fire Chief's Association Fire Prevention Division, Kreyling rehabbed a booth at the Topsfield Fair into a firehouse-themed attraction, where prevention officials from across the county could share their life-safety messages. He developed a continuing education program for Fire Prevention Division members to obtain credits toward their certification renewals. Kreyling serves as a role model to those around him and as a positive influence of the department within the community.







## ENGINE 6, LADDER 6 AND UTILITY UNIT, PINE HILL, NJ, FIRE DEPARTMENT

Engine 6 arrived on Nov. 12, 2023, and were met by police who reported two people trapped in a well-involved dwelling. Ladder 6 was ordered to do a primary search as Engine 6's crew stretched a 1¾-inch handline through the front door and made their way to the second floor. They were stopped by heavy fire conditions and a firefighter's feet falling through the steps. Firefighter Matt Koch searched ahead of the ladder crew and found one of the trapped occupants, an elderly female who was disoriented, just off of the kitchen. She was removed but told Koch that she believed that the other victim was

in the basement, and crews began to search there. Lt. Chris Torres and Firefighter John Duvall were assigned to stretch a second line for the Side D exposure and then were reassigned to search from the rear, where additional reports put the victim. After searching the rear, they moved toward the front, where, under heavy smoke conditions, they found the victim unconscious in a first-floor bathroom and carried the individual to the B side of the dwelling. With both rescues completed, crews were ordered out of the structure. The rescues were completed within 9 and 12 minutes of dispatch, respectively.

## 101, 103, BELVIDERE, IL, FIRE DEPARTMENT

On March 31, 2023, Belvidere was hit by an EF2 tornado, and the winds collapsed the roof of an historic theater onto the concertgoers below. Some 260 people were estimated to be in the building. Crews encountered at least 10 victims who were trapped by debris and in need of extrication. Lt./Paramedic Travis Tangye and Firefighters Matthew Loudenbeck and Adrian Trujillo from 103 and Firefighter/

Paramedics Zach Bullard and Greg Pavlatos from 101, with Lt./Paramedic Nic Thornton, who responded from home, entered the partially collapsed structure to begin rescue efforts. The members extricated multiple victims as the severe weather continued around the weakened structure and pulled victims to safety before triaging and treating them. Forty-eight people were treated at hospitals; one was found deceased on scene.

### Unit Citations Honorable Mentions

Battalion 2, Car 17, Company 6,  
Company 13, Engine 12 and Med 15  
Clayton County, GA, Fire & Emergency Services

Horseheads, NY, Fire & Rescue Company

Engine Co. 1, Engine Co. 4, Engine Co. 7,  
Engine Co. 8, Engine Co. 23, Rescue Co. 1,  
Truck Co. 1 and Truck Co. 6  
Wichita, KS, Fire Department

## GREGORY W. BARTON, BEVERLY HILLS, CA, FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief Greg Barton has worked tirelessly over the past 29 years to ensure the safety of the residents of the city of Beverly Hills as he rose through the ranks. As a firefighter, he pioneered the Community Emergency Response Team, training hundreds of community members to help during a disaster. He developed the Disaster Assistance Response Team training program for the Beverly Hills Unified School District, to educate teachers, staff and students on emergency response at the schools, and introduced the Business Emergency Response Team program for local businesses. Barton championed efforts for Beverly Hills to become a Firewise Community, working with more than 1,600

properties on wildfire safety and leading Beverly Hills to become the third city in California to be nationally recognized. To further promote wildland safety, he implemented the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, to raise awareness of the dangers of wood roofs. Barton organized the city's first-ever Girls Empowerment Camp, to provide young women with firsthand experience in firefighting. In this vein, he aims to inspire future generations and empower them to achieve their dreams. In a citywide effort, he introduced Just in Case Beverly Hills, which created nine neighborhood emergency centers that can be staffed by training volunteers.

### Community Service Honorable Mentions

JAMIE MEECE  
North McCreary Fire Rescue  
Whitley City, KY

ADAM MICONE  
Pend Oreille Fire District 4  
Newport, WA

FRANK JOSEPH RUNZA  
Parkertown Volunteer Fire Company  
Little Egg Harbor Township, NJ

AL WILLIAMS SR.  
Panola, AL, Volunteer  
Fire Department

LLOYD CALVIN CALKINS SR.  
Seneca River Fire  
Department, Baldwinsville, NY



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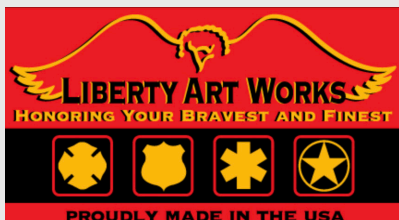
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