



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO Fire-Rescue Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First Responders and Civilians Honored for Going “Above and Beyond” *San Diego Fire-Rescue Department and Rural Metro Service Awards*

(San Diego – October 23, 2015) The San Diego Fire-Rescue Department today bestowed a Medal of Valor upon a firefighter who ran toward harm’s way to prevent injury to another member of his crew.

Last June, while tending to a patient at a downtown trolley stop, Firefighter-paramedic Ben Vernon was stabbed several times by a bystander. When he saw the attack, Firefighter Alex Wallbrett vaulted over a barrier and ran at the attacker and tackled him. While subduing the man, Wallbrett was also stabbed repeatedly.

At a ceremony today, Fire Chief Javier Mainar said, “We are so grateful that Alex and Ben are making a full recovery. The outpouring of support, not only from the Department, but from whole community, was immediate and sustained.”

The award to Wallbrett was one of twenty-six honors handed out at the noon hour ceremony, presented by the San Diego Fire Rescue Foundation.

Former San Diego City Council Member Jim Madaffer and his wife Robin were recipients of Lifesaving Citations. Madaffer has been a tireless advocate for automated external defibrillators (AED) and has carried one in his car for thirteen years.

While driving in Tierrasanta he and his wife saw a man collapsed on the sidewalk. The man had no pulse and was not breathing. The Madaffers applied the pads of the AED; it delivered a shock and they then started CPR. The man began to breathe and when paramedics got him to the hospital he was talking to them.

“I am often most impressed by the civilians we honor here,” Mainar said. “They saw someone in trouble and ran to help.”

Manuel Reade and Kathy Stesney were also recognized with Lifesaving Citations for pulling a drowning man from the pool of his condo building and performing CPR.

Lifesaving Citations also went to eight people, strangers to each other, who stopped to help a young woman who was threatening to jump from an overpass over Interstate 805. They reached through and over the chain link fence, to hold on to her and talk to her until first responders arrived to rescue her from the overpass.

Heroism Awards were given to Lifeguards and the crew of Fire-Rescue Helicopter Copter 2 for rescuing ten people trapped in a canyon above Black’s Beach during a downpour in July. The heavy rain had turned the trail into a waterfall and the helicopter crew had to lift the victims to solid ground one at a time.

Also recognized were Marcelo De Casas as the Firefighter of the Year; John Maher as Seasonal Lifeguard and Rich Haynes as Career Lifeguard of the Year; William Moore, the EMT of the Year; Craig Tenma as Paramedic of the Year and Phyllis Bailey for Civilian of the Year.

The annual Fire-Rescue Service Awards luncheon is put on by the San Diego Fire Rescue Foundation and honors members of the Fire-Rescue Department and Rural Metro as well as civilians who have taken extraordinary measures to help others in their time of need.

The complete list of honorees includes:

Medal of Valor

Alexander Wallbrett, Firefighter III

Steven F. Holladay Memorial Award

William Waugaman, Engineer/Paramedic

Firefighter of the Year

Marcelo De Casas, Firefighter III

Robert Ely Memorial Award

Kevin Pendleton, Firefighter III

Lifeguard I of the Year

John Maher, Lifeguard I

Lifeguard III of the Year

Richard Haynes, Lifeguard III

EMT of the Year

William D. Moore

Paramedic of the Year

Craig Tenma

Civilian of the Year

Phyllis Bailey

Heroism Award (Unit Award)

La Jolla Lifeguard Crew

Chad Carter, Lifeguard II

John Kerr, Lifeguard II

Todd Rice, Lifeguard II

Aaron Estess, Lifeguard I

Gabriel Liberman, Lifeguard I

Shayne McIntyre, Lifeguard I

Kyle Scarry, Lifeguard I

Tarrant Seautelle, Lifeguard I

Air Ops

William Alton, Captain

Lyle Ledoux, Pilot

Steven Vandewalle, Firefighter/Paramedic

Lifesaving Citation (Unit Award)

Boating Safety Unit

Chuck Davey, Lifeguard III

Jeff Jordan, Lifeguard II

Peter Liebig, Lifeguard II

Lifesaving Citation

Robin and Jim Madaffer

Lifesaving Citation

Pablo Salce

Noemi Ruelas

Carlos Sanchez

Michael Munoz

Dominic Collins

Josh Sotelo

Ruban Niebla

Lifesaving Citations

Kathy Stesney

Manuel Reade

Exceptional Performance Citations (Individual)

David Lee, Engineer

Steve Vandewalle, Firefighter II/Paramedic

Rick Strobel, Lifeguard Sergeant

Brian Varner, Paramedic

Exceptional Performance Citation (Unit Award)**Fast Response Squad Personnel**

Chad Allison, Captain

Jason Hewitt, Captain/Paramedic

Kevin Melanson, Firefighter III/Paramedic

Joshua Miramontez, Firefighter III/Paramedic

Exceptional Performance Citation (Unit)**La Jolla Shores/La Jolla Rocks/Boating Safety Unit**

Rich Stropky, Lifeguard Lieutenant

Richard Romero, Lifeguard Sergeant

Marcus Schreiber, Lifeguard Sergeant

John Bahl, Lifeguard III

Juan Gonzalez, Lifeguard II

Bruce Jamieson, Lifeguard II

John Kerr, Lifeguard II

Ashley Marino, Lifeguard II

Brian Zeller, Lifeguard II

Dustin Fiero, Lifeguard I

Shayne McIntyre, Lifeguard I

Chris Rinder, Lifeguard I

Kyle Scarry, Lifeguard I

Tarrant Seautelle, Lifeguard I

Michael Smoker, Lifeguard I

Air Ops

Lyle Ledoux, Pilot

Barry Links, Firefighter II/Paramedic

Timothy O'Malley, Captain

Exceptional Performance Citation (Unit Award)

Windansea

Adam Larkin, Lifeguard II
John Maher, Lifeguard I
Adam Montgomery, Lifeguard I
Matthew Rodgers, Lifeguard I
Trevor Wageman, Lifeguard I

Exceptional Performance Citation (Unit Award)

Engine 4/C

Steven Michaels, Captain
Charles West, Engineer
Benjamin Vernon, Firefighter III/Paramedic
Alexander Wallbrett, Firefighter III

Certificate of Appreciation

Merkel & Associates
ORCA Maritime & Ocean Server

Certificate of Appreciation (Individual)

Ryan Vidal
Trevor Anders
Andrew Thorpe
Brooke Anarde
Charles Evans-Claasen
Jacob Petty
Jonathan Flike

Esteban Bahena Memorial Scholarship Fund

Charles Brookes
Ben Harris

-0-

For more information, contact:
Lee Swanson, Media Services Manager
San Diego Fire-Rescue Department
619.533.3780
lswanson@sandiego.gov