

# 2023 EMS Award Recipients

## Civilian Award

### *Madison Atkinson*

A 15-year-old California teenager, Madison Atkinson, is hailed as a hero for performing CPR on her 3-year-old relative, Maxine, who nearly drowned in the family pool on Thanksgiving; captured on a home security camera, Madison's calm and collected response, learned from a sports medicine class, proved crucial as she revived Maxine, earning commendation from paramedics and emphasizing the importance of CPR training in their family.

### *Eddie Cervantes*

On October 10, 2023, Eddie Cervantez and a coworker, witnessed a mother and her 5-year-old daughter trapped in a submerged car in the San Joaquin River after a collision with a tree in San Joaquin County. Without hesitation, Eddie bravely dove into the water, swam to the distressed pair. He successfully handed the child to another Samaritan and attempted to save the mother. Eddie tragically drowned during a final attempt to save the mother. The paramedic with Manteca District Ambulance, personally involved in the call, had to navigate a challenging path to reach the scene. Eddie's heroic actions exemplified selflessness and courage, ultimately saving one life while sacrificing his own, leaving behind a wife and three children.

### *Brody Higgins*

On December 21, 2023, the courageous and heroic actions of 17-year-old Brody Higgins, who witnessed a double attempted murder, immediately intervened to rescue two children from the scene, potentially saving their lives. After observing a horrific double stabbing across the street from his mother's residence, Brody called the children out of the house for safety, bringing them to his home. Despite the perpetrator visualizing him and fleeing the scene, Brody remained resilient, assisting in the escape. His quick thinking and bravery played a crucial role in ensuring the safety of the children during a violent incident, demonstrating exceptional valor and strength of mind.

## Community Service Award

*David Loomis, Ontario Fire Department*

Captain Loomis, as EMS Captain for the Ontario Fire Department, has demonstrated exemplary leadership by implementing crucial improvements, advocating for progressive patient care, and actively combating the opioid epidemic through protocol changes, educational initiatives, and community awareness efforts.

*Michael Wallace, Blythe Ambulance*

Mike Wallace, a dedicated Paramedic with 33 years of service, is nominated for his exceptional contributions to volunteerism and community service, spanning roles in EMS, disaster response, police reserve, education, and livestock-related activities, showcasing his unwavering commitment and positive impact on the well-being of his community.

## Distinguished Service Award

*Marci Bostic,*

Marci Bostic, an experienced and dedicated EMT, demonstrated exceptional leadership by managing new hire academies, addressing staffing shortages, and fostering a positive work culture while maintaining high standards of professionalism and patient care in the ever-changing EMS system.

*Marc Cohen, City of Beverly Hills Fire Department*

Dr. Marc Cohen's exemplary leadership and commitment to pre-hospital care have significantly impacted programs, including continual education, pediatric readiness, ECMO, nurse practitioner programs, and mental health and homelessness initiatives. Under his direction, these programs have improved patient outcomes, increased access to healthcare, and garnered national recognition. Dr. Cohen's influence extends beyond individual departments, covering one-third of Los Angeles County's population, and his character, integrity, and accessibility make him a valued asset to the communities he serves.

*Kyle Gonerig, NCTI Riverside*

Kyle Gonerig, has demonstrated his dedication to the field of EMS through his contributions to Grafton Hills College. As a Professional Expert, EMS Specialist, Adjunct Faculty, and Primary EMT Instructor, Kyle's profound understanding of emergency medical care and adept instructional skills have significantly influenced the comprehensive development of students. His academic achievements, ongoing pursuit of a master's in social work, and application for a doctorate in education underscore his unwavering commitment to personal and professional growth. He instills a genuine sense of compassion and empathy for patients.

### *Andrew Holcomb, San Francisco EMS Agency*

Director Holcomb has demonstrated exemplary leadership over the past four years in overseeing the San Francisco EMS Agency, successfully navigating a complex transition and revitalization as it moved to the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management. Under his leadership, the agency experienced increased staffing, reconstituted vital services, and initiated programs such as the EMS for Children program and the EMS Provider Agency Medical Directors Committee, enhancing medical oversight.

### *Scott Perryman, Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District*

Battalion Chief Perryman, a trailblazer in mobile integrated health (MIH), initiated and led the Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District's MIH unit, collaborating with four fire districts during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic to establish eight MIH units with PAs, NPs, or physicians. This effort facilitated extensive COVID testing, post-discharge follow-ups, and lifesaving interventions in congregate settings. As the pandemic waned, Chief Perryman refocused MIH on providing high-quality in-field care, reducing ED and EMS overutilization. Integrated into the 911 dispatch system, MIH treated low-acuity calls at home, leading to over 60% of patients being discharged on scene, decreasing ED and EMS utilization. Chief Perryman's leadership resulted in substantial cost savings, exceeding \$2.4 million in 2023, improved EMS efficiency, and enhanced patient satisfaction.

### *Amanda Ward, Crofton Hills College*

Amanda, with over twenty years of dedicated service in EMS, has demonstrated leadership, passion, and commitment to community service. Starting as an EMT and progressing to become a field Paramedic, she has saved lives and built valuable professional relationships as a First Responder. As a Paramedic student herself, she empathizes with the challenges in professional development and actively supports students facing financial or social needs. Amanda's role as a founding member of the Crofton Hills College Allied Health and Medical Careers Day has positively impacted over 1000 young women in underserved communities, promoting EMS as an inclusive field. Amanda's tireless efforts and unwavering commitment to mentorship and career development have made transformative contributions to the field of EMS.

### *Douglas Zabalski, Los Angeles City Fire Department*

With over 35 years of service, Chief Zabalski has served in various capacities, including Paramedic, Firefighter/Paramedic, Captain II/Paramedic, and currently as Battalion Chief/Paramedic in the LAFD EMS Bureau. In his role overseeing the Administrative/Training Section, Chief Zabalski has made significant contributions to LAFD and EMS Bureau Strategic Plans, including delivering exceptional public safety and emergency service, providing oversight of EMS training and quality improvement units, and actively participating in various committees and workgroups at local, county, and state levels. His commitment to promoting a safe, healthy, and progressive work environment is evident in his development of best practices and policies aimed at reducing personal and organizational risk.

## EMS Administrator of the Year

*Nicholas Clay, Santa Barbara EMS Agency*

Recognizing Nick's exemplary leadership as the EMS Administrator for the County of Santa Barbara EMS Agency, where he successfully navigated challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, large-scale wildfires, and the Montecito mudslide, demonstrating dedication to the state and local Emergency Medical Services systems, while also assuming the role of president for the Emergency Medical Services Administrators Association of California (EMSARC), advocating for local EMS system issues on a statewide level, and implementing innovative measures to modernize EMSAAC's online platforms, showcasing his unwavering commitment to prioritizing high-quality, equitable, and efficient patient care.

## EMS Cross

*Henry Vasquez, American Medical Response*

With almost four decades of dedicated service, Henry stands out as an exemplary leader in EMS, actively contributing as a full-time Paramedic, Skills instructor, mentor, Lead Field Training Officer, Associate Supervisor, disaster response team leader, "Care Team" Chairperson, and Critical Incident Stress Management Team member, showcasing unwavering commitment, leadership, and passion in guiding and supporting his colleagues and the community.

## EMS Educator of the Year

*Chris LeBaudour, Marin County EMS Agency*

Chris, with forty years as faculty at the Public Safety Training Center, stands as a humble yet influential figure in EMS education, contributing significantly to the growth of the next generation of EMS leaders. Serving on the Board of Directors of the National Association of EMS Educators and participating in the Lighthouse Leadership Mentor Program, Chris has demonstrated dedication to advancing EMS education. His extensive involvement with NAEMSE, including board membership and contributions to the development of National EMS Education Standards, showcases his commitment to shaping educational standards and supporting fellow educators. Beyond his role as faculty, Chris has served as EMS Administrator for the County of Marin and in leadership positions at REACH Air Medical Services and Falck. Holding degrees in Communication and Education, Chris has maintained EMT certification since 1979, authored numerous textbooks, and is recognized as a mentor in the NAEMT Lighthouse Leadership Mentor Program for 2023-2024.

## EMS Medical Director of the Year

*Jeffrey Kepple, Northern California EMS*

Over 30 years, Dr. Kepple has transformed rural EMS, overseeing essential positions, rewriting treatment guidelines, and fostering positive relationships with state agencies and stakeholders. During the COVID-19 pandemic and wildfires, he demonstrated resilience, ensuring continuity of care despite personal evacuations. Dr. Kepple's advocacy for education, support for virtual training, and involvement in medical conferences highlight his commitment to healthcare improvement. Beyond his medical roles, he engages in community service, environmental conservation, and musical pursuits, embodying a holistic approach to healthcare. Colleagues commend his inspirational leadership, provider-first attitude, and dedication to addressing challenges in rural EMS.

## EMT of the Year

*Brendan Cleary, Contra Costa Fire Protection District*

Brendan, a dedicated paramedic and firefighter, has consistently demonstrated clinical excellence and exceptional compassion in critical situations. Notably, he provided comforting care to an 80% burn victim, praying with the patient at their request and facilitating a heartfelt message to their family, showcasing his human kindness. Brendan also exhibited quick thinking and clinical expertise in a complex case involving a 15-year-old with severe injuries, preventing further deterioration. Additionally, he played a crucial role in the successful resuscitation of a newborn in cardiac arrest, ensuring a positive outcome without ischemic injuries. Brendan's commitment to continuous learning, genuine concern for each patient's well-being, and leadership qualities, coupled with his background as a proud Marine, make him a highly respected figure among his fellow firefighters and paramedics.

## Inter-Service EMS Recognition Medal

*John Cunningham, Samantha Naghaway, John Broc*

*Hawthorne Police Department*

On February 6, 2022, Officers Broc, Cunningham, and Naghaway responded to a shots fired call, confronting a man holding a child hostage and discovering a female victim with a gunshot wound to her leg, severely bleeding and in and out of consciousness. While fellow officers dealt with the suspect and hostage, Broc, Cunningham, and Naghaway demonstrated quick and decisive actions, realizing the critical nature of the woman's injuries. Officer Broc applied a tourniquet to the spurting wound, Officer Cunningham assisted in securing it, and Officer Naghaway ensured a comprehensive assessment, calling for additional equipment and recommending a second tourniquet when needed. Despite the woman's grave condition, their interventions played a pivotal role in saving her life, receiving commendation from medical professionals at Harbor General Hospital for their exemplary care and swift decision-making.

### *Pedro Nambo, Shelly Yoshida, Hawthorne Police Department*

On February 7, 2023, Hawthorne Police Department officers, including Motor Officer Pedro Nambo and Gang Investigator Yoshida, responded to a shooting at Manor Motel. Nambo, hearing the initial call, swiftly reached the location and discovered a bleeding victim walking away from the scene. Recognizing the urgency, Nambo gathered information from the victim, assessed his deteriorating consciousness, and promptly administered life-saving aid, including chest seals. Gang Investigator Yoshida joined in the effort, applying additional chest seals. Their quick and efficient medical interventions played a crucial role in preventing the victim from succumbing to the gunshot wound. After providing aid, Nambo assisted in containing the suspect, while Yoshida remained with the victim until fire personnel arrived. Both officers, Nambo and Yoshida, demonstrated commendable professionalism and diligence in saving the victim's life, deserving recognition for their exemplary actions.

### *John Yoshida, Hawthorne Police Department*

On May 23, 2022, Officer John Yoshida of the Hawthorne Police Department responded to a distress call involving a male attempting suicide at a Carl's Jr. Restaurant. Despite the challenging circumstances, Officer Yoshida, upon arrival, quickly assessed the severity of the situation and called for emergency medical equipment. He located the victim, an elderly male wedged between a retaining wall and the building, bleeding profusely from self-inflicted wrist injuries. Demonstrating remarkable courage and quick thinking, Officer Yoshida jumped into the confined space, applied a tourniquet to stop the bleeding, and directed assisting personnel in safely removing the victim. The LA County Fire Department medics credited Officer Yoshida's swift response, stating that without it, the victim would have bled to death. Despite the victim's significant injuries, Officer Yoshida's actions ensured his survival, earning him exemplary recognition and reflecting great credit upon himself and the Hawthorne Police Department.

## **Lifesaving Medal**

### *Cory Patterson, Sacramento County Sheriffs Department*

On December 31, 2023, around 7:30 PM while off duty, Sacramento County Sheriff's Office Deputy Patterson, accompanied by his wife and baby son, responded heroically to a crash at Mitchell Middle School Park in Rancho Cordova. Discovering an unresponsive driver inside a locked vehicle, Deputy Patterson, along with other bystanders, worked together to extract the victim. Patterson immediately initiated basic life-saving techniques, including CPR, until Rancho Cordova Police officers and medics arrived. The victim was subsequently transported to Mercy San Juan Hospital, where further life-saving procedures were performed. With four and a half years of service and currently serving as a Training Officer in a Correctional Facility, Deputy Patterson's recent CPR training proved invaluable in this critical incident. His unwavering dedication to community service, exemplified by his off-duty actions, reflects a commitment to "Service with Concern," positively impacting both the community and his colleagues, deserving recognition for his exceptional service.

### *Walter Patton, Santa Monica Fire Department*

On the evening of October 25, 2023, the serene atmosphere of a high school baseball game in Downey was abruptly disrupted when the home plate umpire collapsed. In a moment of crisis, Santa Monica Fire Captain Walter Patton, drawing upon decades of EMS experience, recognized the gravity of the situation – a sudden cardiac arrest with imminent death without swift intervention. Taking immediate action, Captain Patton initiated CPR, skillfully directed others in the life-saving efforts, and utilized an AED provided by school staff to defibrillate the unconscious umpire. When Downey Fire Department paramedics arrived, they continued advanced cardiac care, achieving Return of Spontaneous Circulation (ROSC). Transported to the closest cardiac center, the patient regained consciousness, defying the odds of such positive outcomes. Captain Patton's decisive actions, not only in administering critical medical care but also in addressing the potential trauma for the high school baseball players, underscore his exceptional commitment to emergency medicine and the larger community, deserving commendation for his instrumental role in this life-saving incident.

## Medal of Valor

*Jared Gvesrude, Logan Romo, American Medical Response*

In a chaotic scene following a collision involving multiple vehicles and a still-alarming fire, Jared and Logan, responding to the urgent call without hesitation, swiftly triaged and assisted their trapped colleagues while articulating critical information for a thorough scene assessment. Despite the imminent danger with an engulfed and exploding vehicle, they assisted in loading a critically injured unconscious patient, demonstrating exceptional valor and expertise in preserving lives through their emergency medical care. Their prompt actions not only expedited the trauma patients' transport to the local trauma center but also allowed for the reassessment and aid of other involved patients, showcasing their outstanding commitment to emergency medical services and the preservation of life in the midst of a complex and hazardous collision scene.

*Echo Hrowal, Riley Wolfe, American Ambulance Response*

During a late-night shift, Riley and Echo, responded to a still-alarm reporting a freeway traffic collision with a vehicle on fire. Faced with a trapped and unconscious driver and a rapidly spreading fire, Riley and Echo acted decisively, breaking a window to gain entry and collaborating to rescue the unconscious patient. They communicated their precise location to other crews, initiated patient assessment and treatment, and simultaneously called for additional resources while attempting to control the blaze with a fire extinguisher from their ambulance. The crew and patient narrowly escaped harm as the car exploded shortly after extraction. Riley and Echo efficiently directed additional resources to other vehicles, ensuring colleague safety. They triaged passengers, treated the patient in the back of the ambulance, and expedited transport Code 3 to the hospital, reaching the Trauma Center before other public safety units arrived. The critical patient, whose survival was attributed to Riley and Echo's vigilance and bravery, exemplified exceptional heroism under extraordinary circumstances, leading to the preservation of a life that may have otherwise been lost.

*Eric Lee, Grant Roth, Shane Seacord*

*Los Angeles Sheriff's Department*

On October 6th, 2023, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Emergency Services Detail faced a challenging vehicle rescue operation in the Angeles National Forest. Responding to a vehicle that had crashed over the side of a cliff, the Air Rescue 5 helicopter crew, including Deputy Shane Seacord, Deputy Grant Roth, and Sergeant Eric Lee, determined that traditional hoist methods were unsafe due to the unstable vehicle position. Opting for a land-based rescue, they ingeniously built a rope system anchored to a nearby vehicle to rappel down to the trapped driver. Deputy Seacord successfully extricated the victim suspended on a cliff, providing initial medical care. The crew then executed a meticulous plan, utilizing a rescue vehicle winch system to raise the patient and Deputy Seacord to safety. Their collective effort and bravery ensured the success of the operation, highlighting their dedication and courage in the face of extreme danger.



## Meritorious Service Medal

*Tim Williams, Merced County EMS Agency*

Williams has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving EMS services in Merced. Recognizing the need for change, he empowered committees, organized EMS policies, and established a Management Policy system. Williams, who listens to issues and is unafraid to address them, has been a critical figure at the crossroads of the California EMS community. He has successfully navigated relationships with both public and private ambulance companies, addressing staffing crises and solving paramedic shortages. Williams' leadership and balance, particularly in times of crisis like the 2023 Federal Disaster and the pandemic, have created fantastic opportunities for the community and improved outcomes for patients.

*Ryan Andrews, Justin Birrell, Robbie Blake, Corey Calloway, Jon Chang, Dominic Garcia, Benjamin Gomory, Matthew Hart, Scott Kelley, Mark Khali, Cory Kilburn, David Lawson, Mario Lenni, Travis McGee, Frank Padilla, Andrew Respicio, Justin Tejo, Ralf Weissenberg*

*Monterey Park Fire Department*

On January 21st, 2023, at 10:25 pm, Monterey Park Fire Department swiftly responded to a reported gunshot wound at 122 W. Garvey Ave., discovering a mass casualty incident with 10 deceased, 6 immediate, and 3 delayed patients. The coordinated efforts of Engine 61, Quint 61, Engine 62, Engine 63, Rescue Ambulance 61, Rescue Ambulance 62, and Battalion 6, alongside outside resources, proved instrumental. Quint 61 initiated triage, Engine 61 led treatment efforts, and Battalion 6 assumed command, establishing a command post. Despite the profound mental impact on the responders, their dedicated and flawlessly executed actions contributed to the successful treatment and survival of the majority of victims, prompting a nomination for the Meritorious Service Medal in recognition of their heroic efforts.