

HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

News Release



Media Contact:
Lisa Kiava
(612) 919-5918

Sheriff awards citizens for heroic rescues and community work

November 4, 2010 (MINNEAPOLIS) – Tonight, Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek presented 12 awards to citizens who performed lifesaving acts or who volunteer to help their community. The award ceremony took place at Elsie's restaurant, 729 Marshall Street Northeast, Minneapolis.

Don Machacek of Inver Grove Heights received the Citizen's Medal of Valor, the highest citizen award available from the Sheriff's Office. It is given to those who risk personal harm with the intention of providing assistance to law enforcement or another person.

Machacek works as a Freeway Incident Response Safety Team vehicle driver for the Minnesota Department of Transportation. In July, he responded to an emergency call that a vehicle that had veered off the highway and was submerged in a pond. Machacek rushed to the car and had to deal with thick mud and water up to his neck. The victims reported water had filled most of the car and it was becoming difficult to breath. Machacek was able to pull open the door to the vehicle and assist the three victims safely to the shore.

"When Don entered the pond that afternoon, it's clear that the last thing on his mind was his own safety – but rather, he was focused on a family in peril," said Sheriff Stanek.

The Sheriff also presented the Award of Merit awards to several people for their community work. Among the recipients was V.J. Smith of MAD DADs in Minneapolis. Smith mentors inmates in the jail and encourages them to follow his example by breaking free from a life of crime and taking responsibility for their lives.

"Inmates can relate to V.J. because he has walked in their shoes," said Sheriff Stanek, "V.J. has a big heart and he's determined to reach out to people and help them return to the community as productive citizens."

Other citizens who received awards at the event include:

Citizen Commendation Award

Four citizens, employed at the YMCA in Minneapolis, rescued a man who nearly drowned in March. A swimmer noticed the man on the bottom of the pool. The lifeguard and his co-workers pulled the man from the water, administered CPR, and saved the man's life. Those honored for the rescue: Lifeguard Tyler Conway of Richfield, Blanca Garcia of White Bear Lake, Nicole Daeger of St. Paul, and Adara Bryan of Minneapolis.

Citizen Commendation Award

In September, a wooden boat sank on Lake Minnetonka and six people wound up in the water --- many of them were injured. Citizens on two other boats were nearby when the incident took place and rescued the people who were in the water. Four citizens assisted in the rescue: Mark and Catherine Welna of Minneapolis and Michael and Joann Nicklaus of Shorewood.

Sheriff's Award of Merit

Peggy Rasmussen of Golden Valley is recognized for her leadership role in the community. She is a former member of the citizen-led Hennepin County Capital Budget Task Force. She is a past board member of the Hennepin County Library Foundation and past Chair of the Board of the TwinWest Chamber of Commerce.

Sheriff's Award of Merit

Sister Benita Kordiak of Minneapolis is currently a pastoral minister at Church of the Holy Cross in Minneapolis. She is a longtime friend of the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office and she provides Sheriff Stanek with guidance. As a pastoral minister with her church, she is active in the community and visits with people who are sick, homebound, or terminally ill.

For media inquires, contact Hennepin County Sheriff's Office PIO Lisa Kiava at 612-919-5918 or lisa.kiava@co.hennepin.mn.us

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