



For Immediate Release – October 20, 2022

Paramedics Recognized for going Above the Call of Duty

(Kingston) – At the first in-person award ceremony since the beginning of the pandemic, the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs (OAPC) handed out seven special awards to deserving recipients: five to paramedics going above and beyond, risking their own safety for the safety and protection of others, and two paramedic service leaders for their contributions to elevating paramedicine in Ontario.

The special awards include the Dr. Norman H. McNally Award for acts of “conspicuous bravery,” and the Richard J. Armstrong award for both outstanding leadership and significant contributions to paramedicine in Ontario.

The McNally award recipients included:

- 2020: Julie Grainger from York Region Paramedic Service for rescuing and treating a patient who had fallen down a 150-foot wastewater access shaft.
- 2021: Matt Hickey and Lucas Leggett of Muskoka Paramedic Services for rescuing and treating a mother and two young children from the second story of their burning house.
- 2022: Stephen Walsh and Maciej Wisniewski of Ottawa Paramedic Service for rescuing and treating two men trapped in fuselage and covered in fuel after their ultralight aircraft struck a hydro pole and started three small brush fires.

The Armstrong Award recipients included:

- 2021: Superior North EMS’ Shane Muir for leadership administering mobile testing and vaccinations for vulnerable individuals in his community, and for his paramedic advocacy to ensure frontline paramedics were a priority for testing and vaccines so they could meet the demands on the road.
- 2022: British Columbia Emergency Health Services’ Kevin Smith (former Chief of Niagara EMS) for his mentorship and encouragement to advance many paramedics’ skills and careers; strengthening partnerships with local paramedic colleges and leading transformative change in Niagara’s EMS system.

“Every day, paramedics face unique challenges and show courage when responding to people in need. The individuals we honour this year went far beyond what’s expected,” said OAPC Past President Peter F. Dundas. “They stepped up in moments of danger, with bravery and selflessness, to help another facing extreme stress and fear.”

“Two of our leaders, also stepped up beyond expectation,” he continued. “They took charge for their services, their colleagues and for the profession. They demonstrate the best of us, and we’re proud to recognize them with these awards.”

Please refer to the attached Backgrounder for further details.

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BACKGROUNDER

The following awards were presented at the 2022 Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs' Awards Ceremony and Dinner held on October 6, 2022. The awards are given in recognition of excellence in paramedic services and the practice of paramedicine in Ontario.

The Dr. Norman H. McNally Award

This award recognizes acts of conspicuous bravery by paramedics in the performance of their duties. It was established in 1976 to honour its namesake who, as Director of the fledgling Ambulance Service Branch, brought standardization to vehicles, equipment, and prehospital care. Because of his success, many consider him the “father” of the current Ontario ambulance system.

The 2020 McNally Award recipient is **Julie Grainger** from York Region Paramedic Service.

On Sunday, December 2, 2018, at approximately 10 a.m., York Region Paramedic Services responded to a call involving an injured person at the bottom of a vertical wastewater access shaft. Updates en route indicated that a worker was seriously injured at the bottom on a 150 foot access shaft.

Paramedic Grainger set up along with Markham Fire for the use of ropes and high angle access equipment. The patient was located at the bottom of a wastewater access shaft with serious injuries. Paramedic Grainger completed this rescue without regards for her own safety and attended to the patient and provided medical care throughout the rescue. In doing so she

placed her life at risk due to deep descent, risk of exposure to unprocessed sewage waste and adverse conditions.

These types of operations, although rare, place the paramedic at considerable risk of injury or death due to the unpredictable environment and rope access. Paramedic Grainger was on scene and with the patient for over two hours facing cold and demanding conditions. Her commitment to the care of the patient never wavered, demonstrating a true selfless act without regard for her own safety.

The 2021 McNally Award recipients are **Matt Hickey and Lucas Leggett** of Muskoka Paramedic Services.

On the morning of October 25, 2019 at 1:43 a.m., Paramedic Hickey and Paramedic Leggett were dispatched Priority 4 to a residence fire with an unknown number of potential patients inside.

The paramedics arrived on scene and found a house surrounded by thick smoke and could see a female holding two young children in the second story window. Paramedics Hickey and Leggett and OPP officers quickly jumped into action by assessing and checking all doors and windows to see if any of them were unlocked, which they were not. One of the OPP officers broke the front door window to gain access to the residence and Paramedics Hickey and Leggett and one of the officers made their way through heavy smoke into the house. When Paramedic Hickey, Paramedic Leggett and the OPP officer arrived on the second floor, they found the mother and her 2 young children (ages 17 months and 9 months) in the front bedroom.

The paramedics knew they could not go back the way they came so proceeded out the second story window and on to a porch roof.

At this time the paramedics and the officer lowered the children down (one at a time) from the porch roof to an OPP Sergeant on the ground. Paramedic Leggett jumped to the ground, while the fire department arrived shortly after the children were out of the house and were able to get a ladder to the second floor where Paramedic Hickey assisted the mother, and the OPP officer out before efforts were made to combat the fire.

What paramedics Hickey and Leggett, along with and the rest of team did was heroic and allowed the lives of a young family to continue and enjoy many more Christmas's together.

The 2022 McNally Award recipients are **Stephen Walsh and Maciej Wisniewski** of Ottawa Paramedic Service.

On the afternoon of September 4, 2021, a two-passenger ultralight aircraft was on final approach to Carp Airport when it struck a hydro pole on the west side of Carp Road, causing the plane to nose-dive to the ground. The collision caused extensive damage to the aircraft, including a fuel tank rupture, and resulted in the plane coming to rest upside down. The collision downed multiple live hydro wires which ignited three separate brush fires that surrounded the aircraft on two sides.

Ottawa paramedics, Stephen Welsh and Maciej Wisniewski, arrived on scene prior to the Ottawa Fire Department and determined that the ground was not energized. When they approached the aircraft, they discovered two conscious male patients trapped in the fuselage with extensive injuries. There was a strong odour of fuel coming from the wreckage and the patients themselves were soaked in fuel. Attempts to access the doors of the aircraft were futile and paramedics Welsh and Wisniewski had no means to cut through the wreckage. At this point, the three brush fires were approximately 50 feet from the wreckage and continuing to grow and threatening to enclose the scene.

Paramedics Welsh and Wisniewski, assisted by an Ottawa police officer and two bystanders, courageously worked together to rotate the aircraft upright and rapidly extricate the injured passengers. Visibility was completely lost and paramedics were surrounded in smoke for approximately 30 seconds. Once the smoke cleared, paramedics quickly resumed care for the injured occupants and removed them to safety.

The two men were transported to hospital and treated for their injuries. Had it not been for the timely and courageous actions of Primary Care Paramedics Stephen Welsh and Maciej Wisniewski this incident would have likely resulted in tragedy. They risked their safety in the face of imminent danger to save the lives of two strangers.

The Richard J. Armstrong (RJA) Leadership Award

The Richard J. Armstrong Leadership Award, named for our dear friend and “Father” of this association, may be awarded annually to an individual recognized for both outstanding leadership and significant contributions to Paramedicine in Ontario. The award may be presented for a particular action or a continuing commitment that the committee views as worthy of the award. It was presented for the first time at the Annual AMEMSO conference in London, in September 2008. It is important that we recognize Ontario’s finest Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs and Managers.

The recipient of the 2021 Richard J. Armstrong Leadership Award is **Shane Muir** of Superior North EMS (Thunder Bay).

Shane is a selfless individual who puts the community, EMS staff and partnerships first. Shane showed exemplary leadership immediately at the beginning of the COVID pandemic when he was assigned to be a lead for COVID testing and eventual vaccination rollout. Shane is thoughtful, organized and responded well to extreme pressure throughout the pandemic. He worked tirelessly to ensure mobile testing and vaccinations were administered to those most at risk in the community. He showed true leadership to ensure exceptional teamwork through his staff members by keeping their spirits up during an unprecedented time. The Thunder Bay Police Service experienced how Shane went way above and beyond to make sure first responders, who were responsible for public safety, were a priority for both testing and the vaccination rollout.

Shane’s work to keep our agency a priority really ensured we were there to do our work well with minimal impact to our operations. We cannot thank Superior North EMS and Superintendent Muir for their professionalism and leadership through the pandemic.

The recipient of the 2022 Richard J. Armstrong Leadership award is **Kevin Smith** of British Columbia Emergency Health Services' (former Chief of Niagara EMS).

As Chief of Niagara EMS, and in previous roles, Kevin has developed a strong relationship between Niagara EMS and our local paramedic colleges. Many dozens of paramedics progressed to Advanced Care Paramedic training because of Kevin's support for staff to enable them to do so. For this work and for his leadership in paramedicine, Kevin was honoured with an honorary diploma in Community and Health Studies from Niagara College.

In the past few years, Kevin has spoken at numerous EMS leadership conferences in Canada (Keynote Speaker, 2017 Interdev Encounter), the United States (Pinnacle), as well as Europe and Australasia (UK Navigator and Australasia Navigator) as well as numerous podcasts and webinars. He has also been featured in a widely disseminated panel discussion webinar. He has been asked to speak on the topic of response plan development and the EMS 'System Transformation' undertaken in Niagara, which includes the development of a clinically based response plan, the implementation of emergency communications nurses in the communications centre, and the implementation of successful Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) teams designed to provide targeted care to identified populations.