



*Congratulations to the
2010 Firefighters of the Year
and the
EMS Provider of the Year*



2010

**FIREFIGHTERS
OF THE YEAR**

*Kevin Oatman, Aldo Cacciotti
and Jeff Hugunine*

**EMS PROVIDER
OF THE YEAR**

Valerie White

Kevin Oatman, Aldo Cacciotti and Jeff Hugunine

FIREFIGHTERS OF THE YEAR (Team Effort)



On the morning of December 31st, 2009, at 1:25 am, the Oneida County 911 Center dispatched the Verona Fire Department to a reported structure fire at 5999 State Route 31 in the Town of Verona. The initial report indicated a fire inside a residential structure. The Vernon Volunteer Fire Company and the Vernon Center Fire Company were also dispatched on the initial alarm as the Rapid Intervention Team. Within minutes

of the initial dispatch, the Oneida County 911 Center advised that they were receiving multiple callers stating that a victim was trapped on the second floor of the residence and the victim was heard screaming for help. Verona Second Assistant Chief Mark Nell arrived shortly thereafter and reported a two-story wood frame structure with smoke and flames visible from the B side on the first floor, signaling a working fire and assuming command. Assistant Chief Nell was then advised from neighbors and bystanders that they no longer were able to hear the screams coming from inside the structure. Assistant Chief Nell then completed an initial size-up and requested additional mutual aid companies from both Oneida and Madison counties.

Verona Engine 6 arrived on scene seconds later with a five-man crew under the command of Second Lieutenant Kevin Oatman. Lieutenant Oatman and firefighters Aldo Cacciotti and Jeff Hugunine followed department SOPs and began initializing interior fire ground operations. The other crew members of Engine 6 began setting up for tanker shuttle operations due to the rural location. After Lieutenant Oatman completed his 360 walk around, he went and met his crew on the A side of the structure. The three-man team forced entry into the residence (bringing 1 ¾ attack line), encountering moderate heat and zero visibility. The interior team advanced inside the structure and was quickly able to locate the seat of the fire (the kitchen and dining room area on the B side of the structure.) At the same time, Verona Engine 1 and its five-man crew under command of Fourth Lieutenant Dennis Relyea Jr. arrived on scene. Assistant Chief Nell directed Lieutenant Relyea to take these two interior crews and ladder the structure in order to begin a vent-enter-search on the second floor.

Lieutenant Oatman's interior crew worked hard to knock down the main body of fire. Additionally, during the suppression efforts, Lieutenant Oatman was able to locate the stairwell leading to the second floor. Command was updated as to the fire being

contained to the room of origin, and command subsequently ordered Lieutenant Oatman and Firefighter Cacciotti to make their way to the second floor and assist in the primary search. Firefighter Hugunine was advised to hold and protect the stairwell with the attack line. Engine 1 crews then made entry into the A side second floor window just as Lieutenant Oatman and Firefighter Cacciotti reached the top of the stairs. Lieutenant Oatman and Firefighter Cacciotti conducted a right hand search atop the stairs under zero visibility and radioed to command that they had successfully located an unconscious and unresponsive female. As the victim was beginning to be removed, command requested Engine 1 crews to finish the primary search on the second floor to confirm that all victims had been accounted for (the primary search unfortunately yielded the victim's dog which had succumbed to the fire.) Lieutenant Oatman and Firefighter Cacciotti carried the victim down the interior stairwell and out of the structure. The victim was turned over to an awaiting Vineall Ambulance to begin resuscitation efforts. The victim briefly regained consciousness and was transported to Oneida Health Care Center. However, due to the unknown nature and severity of her injuries, the patient was sedated and intubated. The patient was then transferred to SUNY University Hospital's intensive care unit in Syracuse for further treatments. The patient, Penny Hale, age 49, remained in an induced coma for the next five days as her injuries were treated. The patient was released from the hospital a few days later. She has since made a full recovery.

As a result of the unselfish acts, innate ability to disregard their own personal safety and the bravery exhibited that morning by Lieutenant Kevin Oatman and firefighters Aldo Cacciotti and Jeff Hugunine, they deserve recognition. Through their diligence and belief in continuous training, they were able to react and take the appropriate measures needed for a successful lifesaving rescue. They have set a fine example of valor, courage and teamwork that brings credit to them and to all members of the Verona Fire Department.

Letter of recommendation submitted by Chief of Verona Fire Department Timothy N. Dodge.



Past Firefighter of the Year Award Recipients

Year:	Name:	Fire Department:
1955	J. Robert Kramer*	Lewis Tompkins Hose Co. No. 1
1956	Lt. Edward Dixon	Great Neck Vigilant Engine & Hook & Ladder Co.
1957	William M. Belinson	Eggertsville Hose Co.
1958	John Patrick Cronin III	Tallman Volunteer FD
1959	Dominic C. Zappia	Massena Volunteer FD
1960	Donald Brown	West Carthage FD
1961	James Gilliam	Lewiston Fire Co. No. 2
1962	Russell Fleischman	Washington Engine Co. No. 2
1963	James H. Jackson	Andover FD
1964	Donald H. Price	Nyack FD
1965	Stephen R. Bucki	Harris Hill Fire Co.
1966	Gary Elbert	Flower Hill Hose Co. No. 1
1967	Gordon O. Schmidt	St. Paul Boulevard Fire Association
1968	Calvin "Jake" Parris	Patchogue FD
1969	Thomas Nameth	Slater Chemical Fire Co.
1970	Charles L. Ossont	Westmoreland Volunteer FD
1971	Barry Simmons	Rhinebeck FD
1972	Hobart A. Abbey**	Forest View-Gang Mills FD
1973	Harry Charkow	Mattituck FD
1974	John A. Keough	Mattituck FD
1975	John Richard Green	Merrick FD
1976	Williard John Hoyt	South Schodack Volunteer Fire Co.
1977	Alton L. Lewis	North Syracuse FD
1978	George Cannella	Islip Terrace FD
1979	Randall R. Rhoades	East Syracuse FD
1980	George "Jerry" Dean	Gates-Chili Volunteer FD
1981	David A. Sedlock	Massena Volunteer FD
1982	David L. Curley	Delhi FD
1983	Richard W. Gehrt	Smithtown FD
1984	Frederic Furrminger	Depew FD
1985	Thomas A. Phillips	S.W. Johnson Steam Fire Engine Co.
1986	Michael F. Reid	Friendship Engine & Hose Co.
1987	John L. Hyzer	Bainbridge FD
1988	Paul Edward Vinciguerra	Chemical & Salvage Co. No. 2
1989	Robert Frank	Central Islip FD
1990	Robert Hitchcock*	Blenheim Hose Co.
1991	R. Charles Zigrosser	Bayport FD

Year:	Name:	Fire Department:
1992	George P. Motchkavitz	Alert Engine, Hook & Ladder and Hose Co. No. 1
1993	Robert Pettigrew	North Babylon Volunteer Fire Co.
1994	Paul A. MacMurray	Hudson Falls Volunteer FD
1995	William H. Pyne, III Kenneth T. Jones	Sayville Hook & Ladder Co. Sayville Hook & Ladder Co.
1996	Chief David A. DiDio	Bellport FD
1997	Matthew F. Merecka	Freeport FD
1998	Larry J. Stumpo	North Patchogue FD
1999	James S. Fredericks	Ossining Steamer Co. No. 1
2000	Samuel Mark Sposato	Brewerton FD
2001	William Brown, III Donald Farrell John Simkins Raymond Valles	Ossining FD Ossining FD Ossining FD Ossining FD
2002	Dedicated to those who died "In the Line of Duty" September 11, 2001	
2003	Brian Stevens	Manlius Volunteer FD
2004	Richard Prudente Fred Steenson, Jr. John C. Glidden, III	Huntington Manor FD Huntington Manor FD Huntington Manor FD
2005	James J. Bucci, Jr. Peter Henry Michael Terzo Joseph Cirincione	Rush FD Rush FD Rush FD Rush FD
2006	Richard Gimbl	Holbrook FD
2007	Al Cinotti	West Islip FD
2008	John Ippolito, Jr. Edward Kunz	Bay Shore FD Bay Shore FD
2009	Assistant Chief Timothy R. Ellis	North Syracuse FD

Deceased *Died in the Line of Duty **Awarded Posthumously



Valerie White

EMS PROVIDER OF THE YEAR



Valerie White has been an active member of Community Ambulance, a volunteer-based EMS organization in Sayville, since 2007, and in that time, has risen to the rank of Operational Secretary, where she oversees and enforces scheduling for all active volunteers. She went above and beyond her job description and showed true selfless heroism on an EMS alarm in which she placed her own life at risk to help a perfect stranger.

Community Ambulance was dispatched to an alarm at a residence in the fall of 2009 when a two-person crew, consisting of Valerie as the EMT in charge

and her partner, a dedicated driver of the ambulance, responded to the scene and subsequently, transported a female patient who appeared depressed to a local hospital.

In route to the hospital, the ambulance was traveling at about 65 miles per hour along the highway when all of a sudden, the patient jumped up and moved to the back door of the ambulance. The patient then opened the back door and tried to step out of the ambulance onto the highway, directly in the path of traffic. Valerie then jumped up, secured her right foot to the wheel area of the stretcher, grabbed the patient's shirt in order to stop her and yelled for the driver to pull over. She then was able to pull the patient back into the ambulance, at which point, the patient punched Valerie in the abdomen several times.

The operator of the ambulance notified the dispatcher via mobile radio that police were needed immediately. The patient then got up to flee the parked ambulance. Valerie once again grabbed the patient's shirt to stop her from running into oncoming traffic, and then the patient actually tried to push Valerie onto the roadway before wrestling out of her shirt and fleeing across the express portion of

the highway. Law enforcement units arrived shortly after and were able to locate and detain the patient further down the highway.

Valerie White is truly deserving of the FASNY EMS Provider of the Year Award. Her performance was exceptional – she took actions that most people would have never been called upon to take and she did it solely to help another human being. She literally hung from the back of an ambulance traveling more than 60 miles per hour along a busy highway in order to save a woman's life. Valerie exercised true heroism by placing her own life at risk in order to help a patient that was in her care and also prevented untold injuries from happening.

It must also be emphasized that Valerie is not paid to do what she does for Community Ambulance, but volunteers her own personal time. Valerie was volunteering her time during this call on a day that was not her regular duty slot. Furthermore, she gives up time with her family and friends to answer to EMS alarms on a regular basis.

The above content was extracted from a letter of recommendation submitted by Chief of Community Ambulance Company Jamie Atkinson.

Past EMS Provider of the Year Award Recipients

Year:	Name:	Fire Department:
2006	Chief Leonard Martin Firefighter George Bassler Firefighter Ronald Ouimette AEMT-CC Patrick Barriere	Keeseville FD
2007	FF James Rosse, II	South Schodack FD and Castleton Amb.
2008	FF/EMT Mark W. Gilson	Olcott Fire Co.
2009	No Award Given	