



21ST ANNUAL

*** REAL HEROES AWARDS ***

Ordinary People. Extraordinary Courage.

Friday, September 29, 2023

USS Midway Museum

American Red Cross
San Diego and Imperial Counties

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The 2023 Real Heroes Awards videos were produced
by **Hildreth Media Group, Inc.**

We cannot stop crises, but we can make sure people never face them alone.

This year's Real Heroes Awards will benefit Red Cross Disaster Relief.

The American Red Cross responds to an emergency every 8 minutes.

Our purpose is to meet the immediate disaster-caused needs of individuals, families, and communities.

From home fires to multi-state natural disasters, the Red Cross goes wherever we're needed, so people can have safe shelter, hot meals, health and mental health services, emergency supplies, recovery assistance and more when they need them most.

The Red Cross responds to disasters down the street, across the country and around the world. From the Hawaii wildfires to Hurricane Idalia, to storms, wildfires and more right here in Southern California, our Red Cross workers are there to provide tangible help and hope when it's needed most. In San Diego and Imperial Counties, the Red Cross responds to hundreds of disasters each year, from devastating home fires affecting a single family to wildfires and flooding affecting entire communities. We need your financial support to continue this vital work.

The Red Cross honors donor intent and all donations earmarked for Disaster Relief will be used to help people affected by disasters, big and small. We're committed to being the very best stewards of our donors' dollar. The Red Cross keeps our expenses low and an average of 90 cents of every dollar the Red Cross spends is invested in delivering care and comfort to those in need.

Please consider donating today. Text the word **SDHEROES23** to **76278** or donate online.



Learn more about how the American Red Cross helps in the event of a disaster.



will match all donations made at today's event up to \$7,500.

When you donate to the American Red Cross, your donation is used efficiently. An average of 90 cents of every dollar the Red Cross spends is invested in humanitarian services and programs. The American National Red Cross is registered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Contributions to the American National Red Cross are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. The Red Cross' tax identification number is 53-0196605.

★ EVENT PROGRAM ★

Registration and Networking

Presentation of Colors

Chula Vista Fire Department Color Guard

National Anthem

Machinery Technician Petty Officer First Class Michael Dalager

Introduction & Welcome

Award Presentations

Gift of Life Hero Award

Dangkhoa Nguyen

Animal Welfare Hero Award

Dr. Brieana Sarvis and Humane Officer Beverly Fitzgerald, *San Diego Humane Society*

Good Samaritan Hero Award

Crystal Bettenhausen-Bubulka

Service to the Armed Forces Hero Award

Mark George, *H3 Heroes Helping Heroes 4Life*

First Responder Hero Award

Officer Joseph Jirjees and Officer Justin Malicdem, *Sycuan Tribal Police Department*

Disaster Services Hero Award

Paula Llanas, *Imperial County Department of Social Services*

Corporate Hero Award

Jack in the Box

Youth Hero Award

Amelia Umstadter

Closing Remarks

Event Chair

Erin Powell

2023 Real Heroes Awards Selection Committee

Committee Chair: Erin Powell

Laura Chapman, *Wells Fargo*

Rockette Ewell, *U.S. Bank*

Shaina Gross, *San Diego Gas & Electric*

Ashley Holt, *Quanta West*

Courtney Pendleton, *Mission Fed Credit Union*

Emily Schappler, *Jack in the Box*



Monica Dean, Event Emcee

Monica Dean is a National Edward R. Murrow Award-winning anchor/reporter for NBC 7 San Diego. She co-anchors NBC 7's 4 & 5 p.m. weekday newscasts and develops content for NBC's streaming platforms.

Monica is a career storyteller and truth seeker. In her nearly two decades at NBC 7 San Diego, she has won multiple Emmy Awards for her coverage. Monica led a year-long investigation for an NBC 7 documentary series titled, "STOLEN," focusing on the sex trafficking of children in San Diego and beyond. Monica and her team were honored with NBC 7's first ever National Edward R. Murrow Award, along with a Golden Mike Award, three regional Murrow Awards and five Emmy Awards for their work on the trafficking docuseries.

Monica is passionate about faith, family and community. She is married and has three school-age children, all of whom are active in their community church. Monica regularly emcees events for a list of non-profit organizations including several that support children, women, sex trafficking survivors, and emergency preparedness/response. Monica also enjoys serving the community through regular volunteerism and motivational speaking.

Follow Monica

Facebook: [facebook.com/monica.dean](https://www.facebook.com/monica.dean)

Instagram: [@MonicaNBCSD](https://www.instagram.com/MonicaNBCSD)

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★ 2023 REAL HEROES HONOREES ★



Gift of Life Hero: Dangkhhoa Nguyen

For more than 20 years, Chula Vista Fire Captain Dangkhhoa Nguyen has donated platelets to help hospital patients in need. After one of Dangkhhoa's platelet donations in March 2023, he was notified by the American Red Cross that his white blood cell counts were alarmingly low. Shortly after receiving this notification, he was diagnosed with leukemia and was on the receiving end of platelet donations. After his diagnosis, Dangkhhoa spent time in the hospital and was released just in time for a very important day — his May the Fourth Be with Us Blood Drive. Dangkhhoa is a hero for helping countless patients through 20 years of donating nearly 200 platelet units. Even when he became ineligible to donate due to his leukemia diagnosis, he continued to help patients through hosting a blood and platelet drive, inspiring many to roll up their sleeves and donate blood and platelets.

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Animal Welfare Heroes: Dr. Brieana Sarvis and Humane Officer Beverly Fitzgerald, San Diego Humane Society

When a man driving his truck heard meowing while at a stop sign, he pulled over to investigate and found a kitten stuck in his truck frame. San Diego Humane Society's Dr. Brieana Sarvis and Humane Officer Beverly Fitzgerald responded immediately, and working together, helped to free the trapped kitten, who was only eight weeks old. Thanks to the efforts of Dr. Sarvis and Humane Officer Fitzgerald, the kitten was rescued, received care from the San Diego Humane Society team, and was later adopted — a happy ending to a scary situation.

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Good Samaritan Hero:

Crystal Bettenhausen-Bubulka

While driving home one evening in April 2023, Crystal Bettenhausen-Bubulka saw a woman who was exhibiting signs of mental distress and intended to jump off the Coronado Bay Bridge. Crystal pulled the car over and instructed her daughter to call 911. She then got out of the car, heroically placing herself between the woman and the edge of the bridge and talking to her until the police arrived. This simple act of caring helped save a life that night.

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Service to the Armed Forces Hero:

Mark George, *H3 Heroes Helping Heroes 4Life*

Mark George is a retired USS Midway sailor and retired San Diego City Firefighter and Deputy Fire Marshal. As both a veteran and former first responder, Mark has experienced challenges that have allowed him to fully understand the needs of the veteran community. After experiencing tragedies and on-the-job injuries, Mark was forced to end his career in the fire service, but he has continued to serve his country and community. His nonprofit organization, H3 Heroes Helping Heroes 4Life, is dedicated to helping veterans and first responders and raises funds to support education and awareness, peer support training, homeless outreach programs, and behavioral health studies. Mark is also a long-time blood drive host, holding Red Cross blood drives each year, including a drive on Veterans Day, and helping the Red Cross collect hundreds of units of blood through various blood drives to give back to the community.

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First Responder Heroes: Officer Joseph Jirjees and Officer Justin Malicdem, Sycuan Tribal Police Department

In April 2023, Sycuan Tribal Police Department Officers Joseph Jirjees and Justin Malicdem responded to a radio call of a residential structure fire near the Sycuan reservation. Upon arrival, they assisted responding firefighters by conducting traffic and crowd control. As they watched the smoke and embers spread to nearby homes, a concerned neighbor approached and told them they believed two children and three dogs were trapped in one of the houses. Without hesitation, Officers Jirjees and Malicdem ran towards the neighboring house, entered the home and rescued two children and three dogs inside, who were escorted to a safe place away from the fire where they were reunited with their parents.

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Disaster Services Hero: Paula Llanas, Imperial County Department of Social Services

Paula Llanas, Director of Social Services for Imperial County, is a true hero to families who received care and comfort thanks to Paula's efforts throughout 2022 and 2023 during times of need. In December 2022, Paula worked selflessly to provide services for migrants who were in the area. She coordinated with dozens of agencies to assist the City of Calexico in caring for these individuals, even coordinating Christmas presents for migrant children through the Department of Social Services. In 2023, Salton City was affected by a mass power outage affecting nearly 1,000 families. Again, Paula jumped into action, relocating her team to the Salton Sea area and coordinating social services disaster efforts for this remote area. Her compassion and leadership make her a true hero to people in Imperial County, and beyond.

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Corporate Hero: Jack in the Box

Jack in the Box has been a steadfast supporter of the Red Cross. During the past year, they donated \$25,000 to support Red Cross Disaster Relief efforts, one of their largest gifts to date in support of the Red Cross mission. They also recently began a partnership with the Red Cross to start a new customer donation program, allowing Jack in the Box locations across the country to collect Disaster Relief donations at the register, in support of Red Cross disaster relief efforts near and far. Jack in the Box has also worked with the Red Cross of San Diego and Imperial Counties to donate food during times of disaster, providing meals for people in Red Cross shelters during wildfires and more.

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Youth Hero: Amelia Umstadter

In the fall of 2022, Amelia Umstadter's father experienced a choking incident that caused him to lose consciousness. He fell backwards, hit his head on the counter, and landed on the floor. Amelia witnessed the fall and saw that her father was not breathing. She called for her mother, who ran downstairs and immediately dialed 911. Amelia performed CPR until her father resumed breathing and regained consciousness. She tended to him with others until emergency personnel arrived. Her quick actions saved her father's life and allowed him to walk away from the incident with only minor injuries. This summer, Girl Scouts San Diego honored Amelia, now in seventh grade, with the prestigious Medal of Honor for her heroism. The rare Girl Scouts of the USA Medal of Honor is one of the highest honors in Girl Scouting and Amelia is only the fourth Girl Scout from San Diego and Imperial counties to earn this honor in the last decade.

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People are the heart of Quanta. Since 2011, we've deployed nearly 16,000 AED units throughout our organization. The use of these devices have **saved 42 lives**, including people in the general public. We're proud to provide tools and training to support the everyday heroes within our organization and are equally proud to support the Red Cross and its mission to save lives and honor the Real Heroes in our communities.



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Congratulations to the 2023 Real Heroes for their outstanding courage.



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Since 1973, San Diego City Firefighters Local 145 has donated countless volunteer off-duty hours to San Diego charities, schools and civic organizations. In addition, they have contributed more than 3 million dollars to community service projects.

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Impossible

When we invest in our communities, we help turn impossible challenges into possible solutions. By sharing, growing, and encouraging, we can create a "can-do" spirit for our communities.

2023 San Diego American Red Cross Real Heroes, we proudly celebrate the success of your commitment and service to the community.

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★ REGIONAL LEADERSHIP ★

American Red Cross Southern California Region Leadership Team

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Malinda McDonald, *Chief Operating Officer*
Glenn Maddalon, *Regional Chief Development Officer*
Debbie Leahy, *Regional Disaster Program Officer*
Jason Brand, *Regional Service to the Armed Forces Director*
Christine Welch, *Regional Communications Director*
Debbie Pari, *Regional Volunteer Services Officer*
Becky Firey, *Executive Director (Orange County)*
Lois Beckman, *Executive Director (Riverside County)*
Yvette Baysinger, *Executive Director (San Bernardino County)*
Ann Anderson, *Director, Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program*

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Marither Chuidian, MD, MPH (*Board Secretary*)

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#SDICRealHeroes

Facebook: **facebook.com/SoCalRedCross**

Instagram: **@socialredcross**

X (formerly Twitter): **@SoCal_RedCross**

Videos at **YouTube.com/SoCalRedCross**

Photos from today's event will be shared at **Flickr.com/SoCalRedCross**

**Nominations are accepted year-round at
redcross.org/sandiego/realheroes**

Thank You!

Valued Community Partners



American Red Cross

Mission

The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors.

Diversity Vision Statement

The American Red Cross aspires to be an organization fully committed to diversity and inclusion by creating and maintaining a diverse, high-performing workforce of employees and volunteers who reflect all communities we serve; by cultivating a collaborative, inclusive and respectful work environment that empowers all contributors; and by leveraging diverse partnerships — all of which helps to ensure culturally competent service delivery supported by effective community leadership and engagement.