



2021 Virtual Inland Empire Heroes Awards

Celebrate the Hero Within!

Thursday, March 11, 2021



American Red Cross
Southern California Region

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The 2021 Inland Empire Heroes Awards videos and virtual event were produced by Hildreth Media Group, Inc.

Welcome

On behalf of the American Red Cross, it is our pleasure to introduce you to the 2021 Class of Inland Empire Heroes. Although we are unable to be together this year to celebrate in person, it's an honor to share their stories with you. These are truly extraordinary individuals and organizations who have made a lasting impact on the community and embody the spirit of the Red Cross.

From all of us at the Red Cross, please accept our sincere thank you for your support. Because of you, the Red Cross touches our community every day through the following programs:

Disaster Services
Training Services
Service to the Armed Forces

International Services
Biomedical Services

The Red Cross was there for people in their darkest hours in Fiscal Year 2020 as we faced another year of record wildfires, hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the Red Cross responses to disasters such as Hurricane Dorian and the devastating California Wildfires, the Red Cross was also active in our local communities. In Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, the Red Cross empowers ordinary people to perform extraordinary acts in emergency situations. Whether it's a wildfire or a home fire, a call for blood, or a call from a service member or military family in need, the Red Cross continues to deliver its vital mission and provide hope when it's needed most.

Because of your support in the last fiscal year, the Red Cross provided the following services in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties:



Assisted **673** families affected by local disasters



Installed **3,590** smoke alarms to help prevent home fire deaths and injuries in vulnerable communities



Provided **6,848** services to military members, veterans and their families



Enrolled more than **26,700** people in Red Cross health and safety courses



Collected **115,307** units of lifesaving blood products in Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties

We were able to do all this and more because of the generous support of partners, volunteers and donors. Thank you once again for joining us and helping us advance the Red Cross mission in our community.

Yvette Baysinger
Executive Director
American Red Cross
of San Bernardino County

Lois Beckman
Executive Director
American Red Cross
of Riverside County

2021 Heroes

2021 Class of Inland Empire Heroes

Animal Welfare Hero: Amber Schlieder

First Responder Heroes: Jack Briner and Scott Pinkerton

Service to the Armed Forces Hero: Octavio Sanchez

Disaster Services Hero: Ginger Bryk

Gift of Life Hero: William Steele

Corporate Hero: Sysco Riverside

Good Samaritan Heroes: Jose Macias and Michael Guzman

Youth Heroes: Tenzing Carvalho and Zubin Carvalho

Spirit of Hope Award: Charles Morton

Thank you to our 2021 Inland Empire Heroes Selection Committee:

Yvette Baysinger, Lois Beckman, Kurt Burton, Brian Daly, Flora Haus,

Mike King, Brenda Madonna and Diane Mar Wiesmann

Jeff Pope
Event Emcee



Jeff is an Inland Empire native, and you can hear him every morning on Hot 103.9 and 101.3 The Mix. In addition to his over 25 years of Inland Empire radio experience, he's also been heard announcing hockey games for the Ontario Reign.

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Altura Credit Union is honored to be a part of the community and proud to support the American Red Cross and the Inland Empire Heroes Honorees.



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Spirit of Hope Award



Charles Morton
In Memoriam

Charles Morton, 39, was a Big Bear Interagency Hotshot squad boss who served with the U.S. Forest Service for most of his 18-year firefighting career. Charles was conducting fire suppression efforts on the El Dorado Fire in the San Bernardino National Forest when he passed away on September 17, 2020.

While fighting a blaze along Highway 38 near Angelus Oaks, conditions changed suddenly and became too dangerous for Charles and his crew. Charles' last orders were to get his crew to safety. They blindly hiked out of the forest using hoses and voices to guide them through the thick smoke and Charles stayed behind to ensure their safety. Moments later, his final words called over the radio, "My egress has been compromised."

Charles Morton lived and died as a true hero. New signs on Highway 38 now read: "*Charlie Morton Our Hero.*"

The American Red Cross is proud to honor the legacy of **Charles Morton** with the Spirit of Hope Award.

Animal Welfare Hero



Amber Schlieder
ARE Animal Rescue

Amber Schlieder leads ARE Animal Rescue, an organization dedicated to saving animals at risk of euthanasia in the community. Despite the difficulties of the last year, Amber and her team have continued to save innocent animals and find them permanent homes.

When Riverside County announced the closures of its shelters due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Amber and ARE Animal Rescue sprang into action. The all-volunteer nonprofit organization opened an adoption center in Hemet, and through their network of foster homes and connections with Petco and PetSmart, found permanent homes for more than 2,000 pets.

ARE Animal Rescue also provides volunteer opportunities for foster youth, who find purpose in caring for animals and serving the community. Some of these youth have gone from dropping out of school to exploring how to become a veterinarian. Amber's leadership, compassion and open heart have changed the lives of not just the animals she has saved, but these at-risk youth.

The American Red Cross is proud to honor **Amber Schlieder** with the Animal Welfare Hero Award.



First Responder Heroes



Jack Briner and Scott Pinkerton

At the end of 2019, Big Bear had seen more lake ice incidents than ever before. This prompted the Big Bear Sheriff's Station to equip their volunteer vehicles with rescue rope throw bags. On January 18, 2020, a family was visiting Big Bear when they disregarded several thin ice warnings and ventured out onto the ice to play. As they stood together to take a family photograph, the ice cracked and gave way. All three family members plunged into the freezing water, about 60 feet away from the shoreline. They struggled for several minutes to escape and quickly became exhausted.

Big Bear Station Citizens on Patrol (COP's) Jack Briner and Scott Pinkerton were volunteers on patrol when they observed the family in distress. Jack and Scott immediately responded to the shoreline with their rescue rope throw bags. The family was unable to self-rescue and was barely able to stay above the water's surface. It was apparent they were quickly developing hypothermia conditions. Jack and Scott deployed their rescue ropes several times and pulled each family member to safety. The family was escorted to a nearby patrol vehicle to begin warming inside.

The American Red Cross is proud to honor **Jack Briner** and **Scott Pinkerton** with the First Responder Hero Award.

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Service to the Armed Forces Hero



Octavio Sanchez

FrontSight Military Outreach

Octavio Sanchez is the Executive Director at FrontSight Military Outreach, a not-for-profit organization providing resources and connection for the veteran community. The mission of FrontSight Military Outreach is to provide a Christ-centered community where veterans and their families can find camaraderie, trust and healing for their visible and invisible wounds.

Octavio served in the United States Marine Corps as a Staff Sergeant and was severely injured by an IED blast in Iraq. Octavio was awarded the Purple Heart. Trauma surgeons saved his life, but he was left with third-degree burns over 70 percent of his face and body. His right hand was amputated, he lost the use of his left hand, and his nose was burnt off. Through multiple reconstruction surgeries, he was able to again look like the man he was before he left for Iraq.

Octavio has turned his situation into one of service to others, regardless of any discomfort he may suffer. Five days a week, Octavio is at FrontSight Military Outreach answering calls, assisting members and doing anything he can to support veterans.

FrontSight Military Outreach helps veterans navigate the return to civilian life, from assisting with filing paperwork with the Department of Veterans Affairs to providing a gym and Christ-centered community for veterans. FrontSight Military Outreach is operated entirely by veterans who share and understand the needs and struggles faced by fellow veterans.

The American Red Cross is proud to honor **Octavio Sanchez** with the Service to the Armed Forces Hero Award.

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Disaster Services Hero



Ginger Bryk

Yucaipa Animal Placement Society

Ginger Bryk has made a career out of rescuing cats and dogs at Yucaipa Animal Placement Society (YAPS). However, during the El Dorado Fire, her rescue efforts expanded to farm animals of all types. When news of the evacuation order for the Oak Glen area came through, Ginger knew people and animals were going to need help. She immediately hooked up her horse trailer to her truck and was one of the few vehicles headed into Oak Glen.

Her first stop was Apple Annie's in Oak Glen, where she was able to get 15 potbellied pigs, 5 sheep, 6 llamas, 12 goats, 1 bull and 3 ducks transported down to her sister's property in Wildwood. Kenny and Amber Rice of American Eagle Construction welcomed all the animals to their horse barn and pasture. Unfortunately, the next day the Bryk and Rice families received a mandatory evacuation notice and all the animals, including her own horses, needed to be transported to a safer location. Ginger reached out to other ranches in the area and mobilized her network to help with the evacuation effort.

The El Dorado Fire was not the first time Ginger stepped up to help animals and pet owners in the face of disaster. In 2017, she traveled to Texas with pet supplies and her horse trailer, ready to aid people affected by Hurricane Harvey. In 2019, during the Sandalwood Fire, Ginger created a Facebook page dedicated to local animal evacuations. This page served as a resource to help people affected by the fire with supplies and reunite them with their pets. To date, this Facebook page continues to be a resource to the local community.

The American Red Cross is proud to honor **Ginger Bryk** with the Disaster Services Hero Award.

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Gift of Life Hero



William Steele

William Steele started donating whole blood while he was in the Air Force in 1962 and started donating his platelets in 1987. Platelets are tiny cells in blood that form clots and stop bleeding. For millions of Americans, they are essential to surviving and fighting cancer, chronic diseases and traumatic injuries. Every 15 seconds someone needs platelets. Platelets must be used within five days, and new donors are needed every day. That's why platelet donors like William are so important to helping save patients' lives.

William lives in Beaumont and makes the regular commute to Pomona to donate every seven days, sitting on the donor chair for two to three hours at a time. The average commute to his donation is 110 miles roundtrip, yet even during the pandemic, he remains committed to keeping his regular appointments. At 76 years young, he has donated more than 800 platelet units, helping thousands of hospital patients.

The American Red Cross is proud to honor **William Steele** with the Gift of Life Hero Award.



Corporate Hero



Sysco Riverside

Sysco Riverside has been an incredible community partner of the American Red Cross for the past five years. They have been a long-time sponsor of Red Cross Heroes events, dating back to the first event in Orange County and many presenting sponsorships for the Inland Empire Heroes Awards.

Patti Cheselske, Region Vice President of Human Resources at Sysco, joined the American Red Cross Board of Directors in Riverside County five years ago and she has demonstrated Sysco's commitment to supporting Red Cross programs and services since.

Sysco Riverside is a steadfast supporter of the Red Cross mission in the Inland Empire, hosting blood drives, donating essential items during disasters, and so much more—a great example of community-minded corporate social responsibility.

The American Red Cross thanks **Sysco Riverside** for their ongoing support and is proud to honor Sysco Riverside with the Corporate Hero Award.

Presented by



Good Samaritan Heroes



Michael Guzman and Jose Macias

On January 24, 2020, 15-year-old Mia Castillo was playing soccer at Cathedral City High School when she suffered a life-threatening event. Without hesitation two bystanders, Jose Macias and Michael Guzman, came to her aid and initiated life-saving CPR.

Michael is a Licensed Vocational nurse, and was the game referee, and Jose is a Certified Athletic trainer for Cathedral City High School and had practiced CPR and lifesaving skills many times. Before that day, neither had performed CPR outside of the training environment. They immediately put their knowledge and skills to use. Jose and Michael's CPR was performed at a level significantly effective to maintain Mia's brain and body health while awaiting the arrival of the Cathedral City Fire Department (CCFD).

The smooth and seamless continuation of Advanced Cardiac Life Support and transfer of care from Jose and Michael to fire department personnel was evidenced by the return of spontaneous circulation of Mia's cardiac system. Mia's life was saved thanks to the heroic actions of Jose, Michael and first responders.

The American Red Cross is proud to honor **Michael Guzman and Jose Macias** with the Good Samaritan Hero Award.

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Youth Heroes



Tenzing and Zubin Carvalho

For Zubin and Tenzing, the impact of COVID-19 is personal. They have lost family members to COVID-19 and have two dozen family members who are healthcare workers on the frontlines. They wanted to protect their family and their community the best way they knew how. Using their background in robotics and the 3D printer they had in their garage, Tenzing and Zubin began printing UCSF standard reusable face shields.

Soon word spread and they were sending face shields to friends and families across the country. With each shield taking more than two hours to print, they knew the project needed to grow beyond their garage. They reached out to friends, teachers and principals to mobilize to help with 3D printing. Eventually, their project became its own nonprofit group and grew to include 16 schools from five school districts with nine robotics teams and eight high schools donating materials and printing.

Collectively, they have spent more than 6,000 printing hours producing more than 18,000 reusable face shields, plus 2,000 other PPE, such as anti-fog safety glasses for farm workers in the Coachella Valley. Zubin and Tenzing have spent more than 500 hours putting together face shield kits, sanitizing, fixing 3D printers, and teaching other kids to 3D print PPE.

Zubin and Tenzing's impact has been far reaching. They have distributed face shields to retirement homes, the Navajo nation, two community hospitals, the ICUs and COVID units of the County and Kaiser Moreno Valley, two school districts, the Riverside Emergency Management Department, Riverside County Registrar of Voters, the Loma Linda VA and countries like the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and an Adventist hospital in Tanzania where their great grandmother grew up.

The American Red Cross is proud to honor **Tenzing and Zubin Carvalho** with the Youth Hero Award.

Presented by  Sysco
Riverside

Regional Leadership

American Red Cross Southern California Region | Leadership Team

Sean Mahoney, Regional Chief Executive Officer

Malinda McDonald, Chief Administrative Officer

Glenn Maddalon, Regional Chief Development Officer

Debbie Leahy, Regional Disaster Program Officer

Steven Alt, Regional Service to the Armed Forces Director

Christine Welch, Regional Communications Director

Toni Chitty, Regional Volunteer Officer

Becky Firey, Executive Director (Orange County)

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Thank You

Valued Community Partners



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.