

# Central Valley Heroes Awards

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Celebrating the Everyday Extraordinary

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**American  
Red Cross**

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# Event Program

## Registration and Networking

### Opening Remarks

#### Class of 2026 Heroes Award Presentations

**Youth Good Samaritan Heroes:** Luis Jimenez-Trujillo,  
Guillermo Rosales and Jose Tadeo

**Global Citizenship Hero:** Samreen Chahal

**Lifesaving Rescue Heroes:** Case Bos and Jenett Porras

**First Responder Hero Award:** Officer Brayden Grove

**Good Samaritan Heroes:** Carlos Perea Romero and Angel Zarco

**Healthcare Hero:** Cory Jaques, MD

**Education Hero:** Laura Higareda-Chapa

**Community Impact Hero:** Rachel Reed

**Military Hero:** Brandi Asacker

**Clara Barton Humanitarian Hero:** Lawrence Fernandez

## Fund the Mission

## Closing Remarks

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*Thank you*

Thank you to our 2026 Central Valley Heroes for their exceptional acts of courage, kindness and compassion. These Heroes reacted quickly to save a life, prevent a tragedy, or unselfishly gave of themselves for the greater good, regardless of personal risk and always without thought of reward. Their actions help us to see the mission and principles of the Red Cross in action, and to make our communities safer and stronger.

# Support Fund the Mission

Text CVHEROES to 76278 or scan the QR code below to donate

**\$10,000** can help save the day when there is an unexpected emergency. Your support can cover the cost to **deploy a response vehicle and two volunteers** to provide financial assistance to a family impacted by a local disaster, **educate 117 community members** on disaster preparedness programs like Be Red Cross Ready and Hands Only CPR, **provide 18 service members with Reconnection Workshops**, provide **81 military families with emergency communications**, and cover the cost of **one blood drive**.

**\$5,000** will provide Reconnection Workshops for **112 service members**, veterans or their families and provide emergency communications and critical community services for **58 families**.

**\$3,300** provides **150 smoke alarm installations**. The Red Cross, through coalitions of community partners, installs smoke alarms and provides fire and disaster safety education in at-risk communities across the country.

**\$1,800** **deploys a volunteer to a disaster operation**. This includes travel, transportation, lodging, food and vital support systems like our online Volunteer Connection portal. The average length of a disaster deployment is **12 days**.

**\$842** provides **food and shelter for a family of 4 for 5 days**. This service includes providing breakfast, lunch and dinner, the costs to mobilize and distribute a cot, two blankets and a comfort kit as well as the costs of Red Cross workers to provide this support.

**\$360** deploys an **Emergency Response Vehicle for one day**. This specialized vehicle was designed by the Red Cross to serve people affected by disasters by driving through affected communities to deliver meals, snacks, relief supplies, information and comfort. This daily cost includes the cost of fuel and maintenance, as well as travel, meals and shelter for the **two Red Cross disaster workers** who operate the vehicle.

**\$100** covers the cost to **educate 10 members of our community** on disaster preparedness programs like Be Red Cross Ready and Hands-Only CPR.

The power of the American Red Cross relies on your generous donations and the tireless efforts of our volunteers, employees, board members and community partners—dedicated people who will continue to make a difference for thousands of lives in 2026 and beyond.



# We Impact Lives Every Day

Your support enables our workforce — more than 90 percent volunteers — to help millions of people during wildfires, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and other disasters.



**Every 60 seconds**, 20 people are assisted by the American Red Cross.



**170 times a day**, Red Cross workers help a family affected by a home fire or other disaster.



**13,000 times a day**, the Red Cross needs blood donations.



**17,000 times a day**, a person receives lifesaving Red Cross training.



**1,100 times a day**, the Red Cross provides services to military members, veterans and their families.



**464,000 times a day**, a child receives a measles or rubella vaccination from the Red Cross and our partners.

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**We responded to more than 260 local disasters within the Central Valley Chapter in FY25. In addition, we:**

Provided emergency assistance to nearly **370 families** in their time of need.

Distributed more than **\$188,000 in financial assistance** directly to hundreds of households recovering in 2025 from disasters of all sizes in the Central Valley.

Provided more than **1,500 critical community services** to members of the military, veterans and their families.

Trained over **18,900 people** in first aid, CPR/AED and water safety skills.

Engaged **1,230 volunteers** who donated their time and effort to support our mission.

Installed more than **800 smoke alarms in 300 homes**, serving nearly **825 community members** by making them safer from home fires.

Statistics reflect service delivery July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025

## Event Emcees



### Heroes Co-Emcee Brian Dorman

Brian Dorman co-anchors the CBS47 Eyewitness News evening shows with Kathryn Herr Monday through Friday. Before joining CBS47 in 2022, he anchored in Michigan, Kansas, Missouri, Indiana and Oklahoma. In 2024, he co-moderated a local congressional debate, filed several exclusive reports on high profile topics, and co-hosted a national fentanyl awareness special.

Brian's anchoring and investigative reporting have earned him multiple Edward R. Murrow and Emmy Awards, and other state broadcasting awards. His work with school bullying awareness, youth suicide prevention and support of youth in the LGBTQ community have also earned him several awards.

Brian is grateful to again be part of tonight's celebration honoring our local heroes.



### Heroes Co-Emcee Kathryn Herr

Kathryn Herr co-anchors the CBS47 Eyewitness News evening shows with Brian Dorman and with Katherine Phillips, Monday through Friday. She started her career at KIDK in Idaho Falls, co-anchored with her husband, Jim, at KMTR in Eugene, Oregon, and returned to her home state in 2001, when she joined CBS47.

Kathryn is an award-winning anchor/reporter who has covered a deadly school shooting, the Wesson mass murder in Fresno, and flown 600 miles per hour with pilots who provided security in the skies over Super Bowl 50. She is a proud graduate of U.C. Davis, an avid Dodgers fan and an enthusiastic animal lover. Kathryn is excited to again be part of tonight's awards dinner recognizing individuals for their service to the community.

## Central Valley Heroes Honorees



### Youth Good Samaritan Heroes Luis Jimenez-Trujillo, Guillermo Rosales and Jose Tadeo

At Woodlake High School, a routine lunch break turned critical when a student began choking during a seizure. Panic spread, but **Luis Jimenez-Trujillo, Guillermo Rosales and Jose Tadeo** did not freeze. They acted.

Working alongside school staff, the three students stepped in to help clear the student's airway and keep him safe until help arrived. Their quick response and willingness to jump into a frightening situation played a critical role in saving a life.

None of them paused to wonder if they were qualified. None of them waited for someone else to take over. They simply saw a person in danger and chose to lend a hand.

Their actions reflect the best of youth leadership and compassion. In a moment where fear could have taken control, they showed calm, awareness and courage well beyond their years. A classmate went home alive that day because three students chose action over hesitation.

Luis, Guillermo and Jose remind us that heroism does not depend on age or title. It depends on heart, instinct and the willingness to step forward when someone else needs you most.



### Global Citizenship Hero Samreen Chahal

Service has always been central to **Samreen Chahal's** life, even as a high school student balancing rigorous academics and leadership roles. As a senior at University High School, Samreen has demonstrated a level of compassion and global awareness that reaches far beyond her years.

For three years, she has served as a Teen Leader with Teens That Care, helping plan volunteer activities and mentoring younger students. Her leadership encourages peers to see service not as an obligation, but as

a responsibility to one another. She also volunteers with Magic Fresno, supporting adaptive sports programs that give children with disabilities the chance to experience confidence, joy and inclusion.

Samreen's commitment to global citizenship came into sharp focus through a mental health awareness campaign she helped launch as part of her AP service-learning experience with WE. Working alongside a Fresno State professor, she organized a virtual presentation that reached more than 150 participants from around the world, addressing stigma and fostering understanding.

With over 1,400 hours of community service and a 4.53 GPA, Samreen plans to pursue a career in medicine with a goal of serving underserved communities worldwide. Her actions today reflect the values of empathy, leadership and service that will guide her well into the future.



## Lifesaving Rescue Heroes Case Bos and Jenett Porras

On an ordinary day at Reedley College, a routine moment suddenly turned critical. A student collapsed and became unresponsive, setting off a race against time. In the middle of confusion and fear, Counselors **Case Bos and Jenett Porras** stepped forward without hesitation.

Case immediately began performing CPR, drawing on training he had completed just months earlier. Each compression mattered. Each second counted. While Case focused on keeping the student alive, Jenett moved just as decisively, contacting emergency services and coordinating help to ensure responders arrived as quickly as possible. Their calm teamwork created order in chaos, giving the student the best possible chance of survival.

What makes their response even more meaningful is what inspired it. Earlier that year, Reedley College offered CPR training after a colleague's husband survived a massive heart attack due to swift intervention at his workplace. That experience stayed with Case and Jenett, reinforcing how lifesaving skills are not abstract lessons, but real tools that can mean the difference between life and death.



## First Responder Hero Officer Brayden Grove

**Officer Brayden Grove** responded to a call involving a one-and-a-half-year-old girl who was not breathing while in the care of her babysitter.

In a small community like Huron, ambulances can take time to arrive. In this moment, waiting was not an option. When Officer Grove arrived, the child was unresponsive. He immediately began CPR, relying on his training while understanding that he was the only medical intervention available until paramedics could reach the scene. There was no backup yet. No equipment beyond what he carried. Just a child whose life depended on immediate action.

Officer Grove continued CPR until the child began breathing again. By the time emergency medical services arrived, she had stabilized. She was later transported for further care and ultimately released to her family. This incident underscores a reality many communities face. Law enforcement officers are often the first and only responders during critical medical emergencies. Officer Grove's ability to act decisively, correctly and without hesitation made the difference between loss and survival.

Thanks to his heroic actions, a family was spared unimaginable tragedy because he was prepared, calm and willing to carry the weight of that responsibility when seconds mattered most.



## Good Samaritan Heroes Carlos Perea Romero and Angel Zarco

**Carlos Perea Romero and Angel Zarco** were doing what they do every day, working the land in Madera County when something felt off. Thick black smoke was

rising nearby, and within seconds, they realized it was coming from a school bus stopped at the intersection of Avenue 8 and Road 23.5. Inside there were about 20 children.

Without hesitation, and without protective gear or training, they ran toward the danger. Flames were spreading fast, but Carlos and Angel helped evacuate the students, guiding them to safety. As the situation intensified, Carlos made a decision that could have cost him his life. He climbed back onto the bus to

make sure no child was left behind even as the back of the bus was already engulfed in flames.

Thanks to their quick thinking and courage, every student escaped without injury. What could have been a devastating tragedy became a powerful example of ordinary people rising to the occasion in an extraordinary moment.

When faced with fear and uncertainty, they chose to act, putting the lives of others before their own.



## Healthcare Hero Cory Jaques, MD

In the Central Valley, access to child and adolescent psychiatric care is limited and moments of crisis often leave families with few safe options. **Cory Jaques, MD** has spent years operating inside that reality, showing up where the need is greatest and staying long after most would burn out.

A children's psychiatrist working across emergency departments, inpatient units and community clinics, Dr. Jaques is known for his careful, deliberate approach. He listens, evaluates and considers the full context of each child before determining a path forward. Families trust him because his decisions are grounded in understanding, rather than taking shortcuts.

Dr. Jaques is a key force behind the development of a new Youth Crisis Stabilization Unit in partnership with Kaweah Health. The unit will give young people in mental health crisis an alternative to emergency rooms, offering timely care in a calmer, developmentally appropriate setting. This shift represents a safer entry point for youth and their families into care.

Beyond his clinical work, Dr. Jaques has helped train and mentor new psychiatrists, addressing a long-standing shortage of providers in the region. Many young patients request him by name, a reflection of the trust he builds through consistency and respect.

Dr. Jaques' impact is not defined by volume or visibility, but by sound judgment, steady presence and extreme hours of work in keeping young lives on track when it matters most, day after day and year after year.



### Education Hero

## Laura Higareda-Chapa

**Laura Higareda-Chapa** works at the intersection of education, justice and compassion. As the first education attorney in the Juvenile Unit of the Fresno County Public Defender's Office, she advocates for students who are often pushed out of classrooms when they need support the most.

Many of the youth Laura serves have experienced trauma, foster care, homelessness or involvement in the juvenile justice system. They are disproportionately disciplined and excluded from school. Laura works tirelessly to challenge inappropriate suspensions and expulsions, ensuring that education remains accessible rather than punitive.

Her work goes beyond individual cases. Laura educates school districts on legal requirements related to discipline and is launching Know Your Rights trainings to empower students, educators and law enforcement. Through these efforts, she is helping shift systems toward fairness and accountability.

In 2025, Laura was selected as one of only 42 attorneys nationwide to attend the Youth Defender Advocacy Program Summer Academy, a recognition of her leadership in youth defense and education equity. Locally, she contributes to cross-sector efforts aimed at improving educational stability for foster youth.

Laura's heroism lies in her belief that education is not a privilege. It is a right worth defending.



### Community Impact Hero

## Rachel Reed

**Rachel Reed** is often contacted when families realize they cannot navigate senior care alone. A parent is declining. A caregiver is exhausted. Decisions feel urgent and unclear. Rachel's role is to bring structure to moments that feel overwhelming.

Her work is rooted in experience. Before founding Assured Senior Living Solutions, Rachel served as a case worker at Central Valley Regional Center, helping individuals with developmental disabilities and their families navigate complex systems. There she saw how easily people fall through gaps created by paperwork, policy and stress.

Today, Rachel supports families across the Central Valley by helping them identify appropriate senior living options at no cost. She does not offer quick fixes or generic lists. She evaluates needs, explains options and stays involved through the decision-making process, ensuring dignity and transparency at every step.

Rachel's impact reaches beyond individual families. She co-founded The Aging Network California to improve coordination among providers, hospitals and nonprofits, reducing missed connections and preventable crises. She also partners with local organizations to provide free education on dementia care, placement planning and essential documentation.

Rachel Reed's heroism is not defined by a single dramatic moment. It is defined by steady leadership, clear judgment and the trust she builds when families need it most.



### Military Hero Brandi Asacker

When **Brandi Asacker** discusses veterans, she speaks from a place of profound understanding. After serving in the military herself, she saw firsthand how difficult the transition to civilian life can be and how isolating it often feels. Instead of accepting that reality, she set out to change it.

As the Founder and CEO of Beyond the Barracks, Brandi created a space where veterans can find connection, resources and a sense of belonging. The opening of the Beyond the Barracks Veterans Community Center in Old Town Clovis marked a major milestone, offering a home away from home for those who have served.

The center offers a welcoming environment where veterans can gather, heal and support one another as they transition into life after service. Brandi's vision recognizes that community is not optional for well-being. It is essential. Through programs, peer connection and advocacy, she has built a place where veterans are understood and valued.

Brandi's leadership reflects courage of a different kind. The courage to identify a gap, speak openly about hard truths and build something lasting to support others. Her work ensures that veterans in the Central Valley do not have to face their journeys alone.



## Clara Barton Humanitarian Hero Lawrence Fernandez

**Lawrence Fernandez** has spent nearly three decades doing work most people never see, yet everyone benefits from. His impact is not measured by a single moment or headline, but by the steady creation of safer schools, stronger systems and young lives redirected before crisis ever takes hold.

As a lifelong Madera resident and leader within the Madera Unified School District, Lawrence's commitment to service is deeply personal. He is protecting his neighbors, his children's classmates and the future of the place he calls home. In his role overseeing school safety, Lawrence approaches every decision with the same guiding question: how do we keep students safe while preserving their dignity, trust and sense of belonging?

Under his leadership, Madera Unified has become a model for proactive and compassionate safety. He helped implement advanced weapons-detection systems to protect students and families while maintaining a welcoming school environment. He championed the introduction of therapy dogs across campuses, recognizing that emotional safety is just as critical as physical security.

Lawrence's vision reaches far beyond technology. He has been instrumental in launching programs that address the root causes of disengagement and harm. Options builds positive relationships between students and law enforcement, opening pathways to understanding and career exploration. Redirect creates powerful dialogue between at-risk youth and trained inmates, offering a perspective that interrupts cycles of violence and gang involvement. radKIDS empowers even the youngest students with confidence and self-advocacy, replacing fear with knowledge.

Recognizing the importance of mentorship and identity, Lawrence also helped bring Gonzalez Boxing to students, pairing discipline and physical resilience with guidance from local mentors. He also supported the launch of Choices, a program designed to uplift young women through meaningful conversations with female leaders and professionals, expanding how students envision their futures.

Lawrence Fernandez does not wait for tragedy to strike before acting. He works relentlessly to prevent it. His humanitarian leadership reflects the very legacy Clara Barton established through foresight, compassion and unwavering service to others. Through his dedication, countless students are safer, supported and given the chance to thrive.

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*Thank you*

**To Our 2026 Central Valley Heroes Awards Planning Committee**

**Marcy Cochron**

**Siana-Lea Gildard**

**Tasha O'Neal**

**Taylor Poisall**

**Vanessa Puopolo**

**Noor Sabharwal**

**Blanca Santana**

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**Get involved with your local Red Cross!**

**[redcross.org/centralvalley](https://redcross.org/centralvalley)**

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**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.