

Central Valley Heroes Awards

Celebrating the Everyday Extraordinary



**American
Red Cross**

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Welcome



On behalf of the American Red Cross, it is my pleasure to introduce you to the **2024 Class of Central Valley Heroes**. It's an honor to share their stories with you and be together to celebrate these everyday extraordinary heroes. These are truly remarkable individuals who have made a lasting impact on the Central Valley community and embody the spirit of the Red Cross mission.

From all of us at the Red Cross, please accept my 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

In the Central Valley, the Red Cross empowers ordinary people to perform extraordinary acts in emergency situations. Whether it's a wildfire or home fire, 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 of the Central Valley:

- Responded to **281** disasters and provided help for **1,184** people affected
- Provided more than **1,638** services to military members, veterans and their families
- Enrolled over **9,530** people in Red Cross health and safety courses
- Provided preparedness education to **2,248** adults, youth and businesses
- Installed more than **530** smoke alarms and made 333 homes safer

In 2023, we launched the **Community Adaptation Program** in Tulare County, which aims to build more resilient communities in disaster-prone areas where families already face societal inequities. We are partnering with local nonprofits to help strengthen their capacity, capability and continuity to provide services such as access to health care, nutritious food and housing to underserved local families.

We were able to do 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.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori Wilson". The script is fluid and cursive.

Lori Wilson

Executive Director, Central Valley Chapter
Serving Fresno, Kings, Madera, Mariposa and Tulare Counties

Help Can't Wait DURING EMERGENCIES



We invite you and others to join the American Red Cross mission by volunteering, learning lifesaving skills or making a financial donation. Your support helps ensure families don't face emergencies alone.

Volunteer. Donate. Take a Class.
Visit [redcross.org/RedCrossMonth](https://www.redcross.org/RedCrossMonth) to learn more.



Please consider donating today. Complete the pledge card or donate online.

Event Program

Registration and Networking

Introduction and Welcome

Awards Presentations

Lifesaving Rescue Hero Award: Brody Willette

Good Samaritan Hero Award: Michael Knight

Youth Hero Award: Janae Alvarez

Healthcare Hero Award: Dr. John Bilello and Eliana Troncale, RN

First Responder Hero Award: Tulare Deputy Sheriffs Michael Torres, Hector Negrete, Javier Montoya and Juan Lopez, and Lindsay Police Officer Bruce Fox

Military Hero Award: Jessica Montano

Community Impact Hero Award: Jeff Detlefsen

Education Hero Award: Garballe Conroe

Global Citizenship Hero Award: Richard Burrell

Clara Barton Humanitarian Hero Award: Patricia Amparano-Rivera

Closing Remarks

Thank you

to our 2024 Central Valley Heroes Awards Selection Committee

Jene D'Ambrosio | Marc' Bady | Angad Gill | Gerald Golstein

Thilani Grubel | Michell Hart | Liz McIlvaine | Taylor Poisall

Steven Shaw | Maria Stevens | Lori Wilson

Event Emcees



Event Co-Emcee Brian Dorman

Brian Dorman is an Emmy and Edward R. Murrow winning TV News Anchor for CBS 47 News. Brian is a Detroit native with 18 years of experience in broadcast journalism. His career spans across much of the Midwest from Michigan, Kansas, Missouri, Indiana, Oklahoma and now California (The BEST Coast!).

His work in youth suicide prevention, investigations that dig into underserved communities, and breaking news has earned his numerous awards, but its his connection to the community that he's most proud of. His role allows him to stay hyper focused on community-based journalism and highlight the phenomenal work of non-profits here in the Central Valley.

You can watch Brian weeknights alongside Kathryn Herr and Chief Meteorologist Lauren Wallace on CBS 47 at 4, 5, 6, 7 and 11 p.m.



Event Co-Emcee Emily Erwin

Emily was born in Ventura but moved to Clovis when she was just 3 years old. After college and a few years of living all over California, Emily moved back home to the Central Valley.

Before joining KSEE24 as the lifestyle reporter and host, Emily was an anchor and reporter in Bakersfield.

She loves local entertainment, restaurants, and community buzz. She's a self-proclaimed foodie and is working on improving her golf game.

Emily has the gift of gab and is never at a loss for something to talk about. She conducts dozens of interviews a day with local businesses, changemakers and entrepreneurs. She's committed to helping local businesses highlight their unique needs and services.

Watch Central Valley Today and connect with your community, local businesses and hidden gems, on weekdays at 3 p.m. on KSEE24.

Special thank you to **Kathryn Herr** of CBS47 for producing our 2024 Central Valley Heroes video stories.

Central Valley Heroes Honorees



Lifesaving Rescue Hero: Brody Willette

Brody has been in recovery for many years, and experienced homelessness in the past. He now gives back daily working with our neighbors experiencing homelessness at Salt + Light in Visalia. Brody Willette supervises the Food Outreach Truck program “Everyone Eats Today”, where he goes out daily and provides food and relief items to people who are experiencing homelessness.

While on his route last spring, he noticed a man in a wheelchair beginning to turn blue. He was overdosing, and Brody recognized the symptoms. There were many people at the scene, but because he was beginning to at the mouth, no one was willing to administer mouth-to-mouth. Brody knew that the man would not survive without CPR, and while others were deciding what to do, Brody had already pulled him from the wheelchair, began administering mouth-to-mouth and then chest compressions. Through Brody’s immediate and compassion actions, he saved the man’s life.



Good Samaritan Hero Michael Knight

When dozens of atmospheric rivers battered the Central Valley, civil servants like Michael Knight went above the call of duty to protect their community. As Public Works Department Director, Michael Knight, and his staff were innovative and resourceful in the successful prevention of hundreds of homes from being flooded.

During the “flood fight,” they worked tirelessly to prepare for the storm, protecting homes and critical infrastructure along the Tule River. Michael Knight and his crew reconstructed a section of the Tule River embankment, a brave and courageous act that saved Porterville homes from being washed away by the raging river.



Youth Hero
Janae Alvarez

Janae Alvarez is a leader in her community and cheer program. Since 2020, Janae spearheaded our community service initiative at Garza cheer and continues to help maintain it as a priority for all program participants. Service events like: Boo Zoo, Beautify Fresno and most recently our involvement with the Possibilities Center of Fresno were initiated with her drive and heart for others.

Janae is not only a great community member but a fantastic leader in the classroom and on the mat. She often tutors other cheerleaders/classmates in her free time when they are struggling. Her ability to give to others consistently, while maintaining a high standard of performance, amazes our coaching staff every single day.



Healthcare Hero
Dr. John Bilello and Eliana Troncale, RN

Community Regional Medical Center's Dr. John Bilello serves as the Director of Pediatric Trauma and is also on faculty of the UCSF Fresno Department of Surgery, where he has helped train hundreds of surgeons who now practice across the country.

He is heavily involved in CRMC's trauma prevention program, in joint effort with Eliana Troncale, Injury Prevention Outreach Nurse. Together, they are working to help prevent tragedies they often see in Trauma Center before they happen through CRMC's trauma prevention program. That includes education and outreach on gun lock safety, distracted driving, car seat safety and pedestrian and bicyclist safety.



First Responder Heroes
Tulare Deputy Sheriffs Michael Torres, Hector Negrete, Javier Montoya and Juan Lopez, and Visalia PD Bruce Fox

On October 17th, 2023, Tulare County Sheriff's Office Porterville Substation Deputies were dispatched to a residential structure fire in the community of Strathmore at 4:10 A.M. The caller advised her husband and 5 children were still inside the residence.

Deputy Javier Montoya and Lindsay Police Officer Bruce Fox were able to pull an unconscious child through a window on the Northwest side of the residence. Sergeant Michael Torres entered the residential fire once, Deputy Montoya twice,

and Deputy Hector Negrete entered three times. Deputy Juan Lopez attempted to control flames and provided First Aid and CPR to the victims.

Deputies on scene were faced with extreme danger that demanded immediate action. The environment inside the home had already rendered five family members unconscious, and without help, the situation would certainly guarantee the demise of those left to the mercy of the uncontrolled fire.



Military Hero
Jessica Montano, Marine

For the last 10 years, Jessica Montano has served as Coordinator for the Fresno and Madera Counties U. S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots campaign. She rallied community members to donate, volunteer, organize materials and more for several months leading up to the holidays. In order to accomplish the mission, she worked her day job remotely from the warehouse and camping

trailer at River Park. Thanksgiving through Christmas day, she worked tirelessly from 5:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. everyday, most nights sleeping at the warehouse or camping trailer to maximize her time.

Over the years she has faced many challenges, sacrificing her time, her job and the holidays with family to ensure the children in our community continue to benefit from this program. Every year she puts on her Dress Blues and marches forward, knowing the challenges she will face and the blood, sweat and tears it will cost her.



Community Impact Hero
Jeff Detlefsen

When Jeff Detlefsen's daughter Hannah was born with a rare condition called Gould Syndrome, his eyes were opened to the realities of the world of raising a child with severe disabilities. A task as simple as using a public restroom became a major hurdle. Spending holidays in bleak hospital rooms, stretching pennies to seek out the best care, and constantly searching out accessible

children's activities is the daily reality for many families like the Detlefsens.

Jeff saw an opportunity to share this generosity and love with other local families who could benefit from this kindness. It started with a plate of enchiladas; the simple act of providing a warm meal to families spending Christmas Eve at Community Regional Medical Center, where Hannah had spent so many weeks herself. Jeff and his wife Mary rallied their friends and family to assemble donated plates of hearty Mexican food and delivered them to families and healthcare workers in the PICU and NICU. Hannah's Helpers was born.



Global Citizenship Hero **Richard Burrell**

Richard Burrell is the founder and Executive Director of Live Again Fresno, a non-profit he started out of the trunk of his family's vehicle in 2012, with a mission to empower individuals and families to break the cycles of poverty and reach their full potential.

Today, eleven years later, Richard and the LAF team continue the good work in the Jane Adams Community. He strategically chose his team and created multiple additions to his non-profit such as, Parent Partners, Mobil Food Service, and After School Programming. Parent partners are parents (mostly mothers) who have utilized Live Again Fresno and are now giving back to their communities in various ways.



Clara Barton Humanitarian Hero **Patricia Amparano-Rivera**

Patricia Amparano-Rivera served as long time cook for Fresno Unified School District for over 40 years where she serviced and fed her staff and students at Carver Elementary School in West Fresno. Her passion and dedication to ensuring no one went to bed on an empty stomach was her motivation.

With a heart of gold and a passion for food, she prepares a hot home cooked meal for anyone in need of something to eat every Wednesday for the last 35 years. Her dining room is the eucalyptus picnic area within historic Roeding Park where everyone knows and loves Mama Pat's cooking. She tirelessly works with Fresno leaders, community members, donors and volunteers to not only serve Southeast Fresno, but the City of Fresno to be a better community as a whole.

Regional Leadership

American Red Cross Central California Region Leadership Team

Tony Briggs, Regional Chief Executive Officer

Dana Regier, Regional Chief Operating Officer

Siana-Lea Gildard, Regional Chief Development Officer

Anthony Benedetti, Regional Disaster Officer

Mathew Garcia, Regional Volunteer Services Officer

Jose Molina, Regional Service to the Armed Forces and
International Services Manager

Taylor Poisall, Regional Communications Director

Lori Wilson, Executive Director (Central Valley Chapter)

Hector Vazquez, Executive Director (Kern County & Eastern Sierra Chapter)

Christina Milstein, Executive Assistant

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Gerald Golstein, California Health Sciences University

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Jordan Scott, Kaiser Permanente

Don Simmons, Fresno State

Steven Shaw, KSEE24 and CBS47

Angad Gil, Youth Board Member

Lucca Lorenzi, Youth Board Member



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.

Central Valley Heroes

Photos from today's event will be shared at [flickr.com/RedCrossCCR](https://www.flickr.com/photos/RedCrossCCR/)
Connect with us on social media @RedCrossCCR

Nominations are accepted year-round at [redcross.org/CVheroes](https://www.redcross.org/CVheroes)