
AFRAS NEWS

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ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA, INC.

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2018 ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA ANNUAL SEARCH AND RESCUE AWARDS



U.S. Coast Guard aviation rescue swimmer and victims aboard a Coast Guard helicopter during Hurricane Harvey rescue operations in the greater Houston, Texas, metro area Aug. 28, 2017. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Johanna Strickland.



AFRAS C-PORT AWARD WINNER

Capt. Nathan Lins, of TowBoatUS Catalina, in California, was selected as the recipient of this year's AFRAS C-Port search and rescue award, for saving the life of a man who went overboard.

Lins was towing a disabled boat when he heard the mayday call for help come over the radio. He grabbed his binoculars and turned on his direction finder, noting that there was a strong signal coming from a sailboat he could see about four miles away. He was immediately concerned because of the panic in the voice of the person making the mayday call, and the fact that the vessel he suspected was making it was still underway – leading him to suspect that the people still onboard did not know how to operate the vessel.

Lins disengaged his tow and headed toward the vessel, arriving alongside after the people aboard were able to disengage the autopilot. The passengers were disoriented, but were able to pass that the man who fell overboard was not wearing a lifejacket and the GPS coordinates from when the accident occurred – thanks to the quick thinking of a passenger who took a photo of the device immediately after the man went over the side.

Lins started his search. Winds were at 15 knots, making the sea state choppy, and the water temperature was 71 degrees, creating a real concern for hypothermia. Lins had traveled about a mile when he spotted the man's head, barely above water. He had been in the water about 45 minutes and was struggling to survive.

Lins made it to the man and threw him a flotation device, which he immediately grabbed. He was unable to swim the 10 feet to Lins' boat, due to exhaustion, so the captain expertly maneuvered his boat closer and pulled the man aboard. Lins notified the U.S. Coast Guard and returned the man to his boat.

In the rescued man's own words: "As the boat moved farther and farther away I realized two frightening things chasing it was impossible and also what a small speck hidden by swells I was becoming. At this point preparing for death consumed my every thought. As the sailboat got smaller and smaller, I was constantly scanning the horizon for other boats. Not a single vessel. This continued for 20 minutes or so until I saw what looked to be some sort of official vessel heading towards our sailboat. The amazing part was that his



AFRAS President Charles "Skip" Bowen, left, presents the search and rescue award to Capt. Nathan Lins at a January ceremony.

direction wasn't towards me but towards where the current was taking me. There was a thought that maybe he wasn't aware of even a man overboard but either way we were set to cross paths. This I knew was my last hope of rescue. As he approached, I gave all efforts to be noticed but I could see it wasn't working. He drew closer and still no reaction. Panic was beginning to grow again and hope was fading. I was about 30 yards away off of his port side as he was about to pass. Then at the last moment, the boat turned towards me but I was still in disbelief that he saw me. It wasn't till he looked over the side to adjust steering not to run me over that I was overwhelmed with what just happened. He pulled up next to me, very calm and professional, and I was like a cat that just got thrown in a bathtub. I couldn't thank him enough but I didn't want to annoy him either. The truth is I don't know how to thank him. Captain Nathan saved my life."

Lins was presented his AFRAS search and rescue award in January. His actions will also be recognized during the AFRAS Capitol Hill maritime search and rescue awards ceremony in Washington DC, Sep. 13. The event will be hosted by Congressman Jason Lewis (R-MN) and is coordinated by the board and officers of AFRAS. The Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as other senior maritime and congressional officials, will also attend.

The AFRAS C-Port (Conference of Professional Operators for Response Towing) Award was established in 2010 and is awarded to a marine assistance provider for their heroic response to aid a fellow mariner in distress.



AFRAS AMVER SPECIAL AWARD WINNER



The car carrier Hercules Leader of the Japanese shipping company NYK in Bremerhaven, Germany

Approximately two and a half hours after being notified of the emergency, the Hercules Leader arrived on scene and started rescue operations. Despite 30-knot winds and 14-foot seas, the crew of the Japanese flagged ship was able to safely embark the six crew off the catamaran. The survivors were uninjured and were taken to Bermuda where they were transferred to shore. The Hercules Leader, managed by [NYK Line](#) of Japan, [enrolled](#) in Amver on March 8, 2011 and has

earned four [Amver participation awards](#).

The captain and crew of the Hercules Leader will be recognized during the AFRAS Capitol Hill maritime search and rescue awards ceremony in Washington DC, Sep. 13. The event will be hosted by Congressman Jason Lewis (R-MN) and is coordinated by the board and officers of AFRAS. The Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as other senior maritime and congressional officials, will also attend.

The Amver Award was established in 1996 and is presented to a merchant vessel that is part of the world-wide Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue System, for recognition in taking part in a heroic rescue at sea anywhere in the world.

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Original imager [here](#).*

The [Amver](#) participating auto carrier Hercules Leader rescued six people from a disabled catamaran 275 miles southwest of Bermuda Jan. 19, 2017, and its captain and crew has

been selected to receive this year's AFRAS maritime search and rescue Amver Special Award.

The 75-foot catamaran, Ninah, was sailing from Stewart, Fla. to Bermuda when they were struck by a rogue wave and activated an [Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon](#) after the vessel began taking on water. "We intend to stay with the boat as long as we can," a crew member of the Ninah reported to rescue authorities in Bermuda, "but we are prepared to abandon ship."

U.S. Coast Guard rescue personnel launched a [search aircraft](#) and [queried](#) the Amver system. The 652-foot car carrier Hercules Leader was located near the Ninah and agreed to divert and assist with the rescue.



CRUISE SHIP HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AWARD WINNER



Carnival Elation underway near Half Moon Cay, Bahamas. Photo courtesy Carnival Cruise Lines.

The captain and crew of Carnival Cruise Line's Carnival Elation saved the life of a fisherman in the Gulf of Mexico, during Hurricane Irma, battling high winds and rough seas to do so, Sep. 10, 2017, and are the honorees for this year's AFRAS Cruise Ship Humanitarian Assistance Award.

The Carnival Elation was in the midst of a scheduled month-long dry dock period in the Bahamas, which included maintenance and major retrofit projects, when Hurricane Irma started forming in the Atlantic. As the storm intensified and threatened the Caribbean, the dry dock facility crew worked diligently to get Carnival Elation seaworthy, so the captain and crew could sail the ship to a storm shelter location in the southeastern Gulf of Mexico. Three days after leaving Freeport, the ship's crew was alerted to a distress message coming from the fishing

vessel Captain Eddie, 60 nautical miles from their position. Carnival Elation's captain and crew sprang to action, hailing the Captain Eddie and sailing toward its position to help, into the storm, which at this point was a Category 3 hurricane. The crew battled 15-20 foot seas and 40 knot sustained winds – with gusts up to 60 knots – to get to the fishing boat's last known position.

Near the Captain Eddie, Carnival Elation's crew established communication and ascertained that the boat was taking on water, there were two souls aboard and that they had a life raft deployed alongside. Elation's crew passed along survival instructions to the people aboard the fishing vessel and advised that they were making their way to the scene at the best speed possible in the rough conditions.



A final radio call from the Captain Eddie notified the crew of Elation that they were abandoning ship and boarding the life raft. A minute later, in the dark of night, a blinking light from the life raft could be seen on the horizon from the Elation's bridge.

From the Carnival Elation: "By 9:54 pm, the life raft light was visibly steady and the Captain skillfully maneuvered the 70,000+ ton, 260+ meter vessel at slow speed in the heavy winds and seas.

Conditions were too risky to place an Elation rescue boat in the water, so the Captain decided to maneuver Elation herself for the pickup. Turning the ship more broadly to the wind to create the best lee to bring a raft alongside presented a new challenge. The strong winds created enough starboard list on the ship, when coupled with the large swell, to risk shipping seawater directly in through the open shell doors where the pickup was planned. In addition to flooding risk, this placed the crewmembers manning the door for the rescue at greater risk, as well as the survivors in the raft of being smashed in the doorway. The Captain quickly adjusted ballast in trimming/heeling tanks to artificially compensate with a port list on the ship to ensure the doors had greater clearance from the seas as the ship rolled in place. At high risk to life and limb, five Elation deck team members were able to get the life raft alongside Elation at 10:07 pm and had one survivor on board Elation within five minutes using a harness and hoisting line marked with glow-sticks. Regrettably, the crew ultimately learned from the survivor that his fellow Captain Eddie crewmember had refused to

abandon ship and was lost when the fishing vessel rapidly sank about one hour before."

The crew of Elation cared for the survivor for several days until he could be returned to the U.S. Carnival Elation's crew didn't just adhere to the time-honored traditions of the sea – answering the call for help from

a fellow mariner in peril at sea – but did so in some of the worst conditions possible, aboard a ship that had been rushed out of dry dock, using backups for some critical systems, like communication. The captain and crew of the Carnival Elation will be recognized during the AFRAS Capitol Hill maritime search and rescue awards ceremony in Washington DC, Sep. 13. The event will be hosted by Congressman Jason Lewis (R-MN) and is coordinated by the board and officers of AFRAS. The Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, as



Capt. Gaetano Gigliotti, master of Carnival Elation during the rescue. Photo courtesy Carnival Cruise Lines.

well as other senior maritime and congressional officials, will also attend.

The Cruise Ship Humanitarian Assistance Award was established in September 2016 and is presented to a Cruise Ship for recognition in taking part in a heroic rescue at sea anywhere in the world.



AFRAS AMVER AWARD WINNER



Container ship Joanna.

The [Amver](#) participating container ship Joanna saved 105 migrants off the coast of Libya Feb. 18, 2017.

The crew of the Joanna was sailing west of Crete, on a voyage to Italy, when the ship was notified by rescue authorities in Malta of a possible migrant or fishing vessel in distress. The crew of the Joanna located the wooden boat, which was holed and taking on water. On the boat were 105 African migrants, including three pregnant women and a number of children.

Despite choppy seas and high winds, the crew of the Joanna were able to secure the boat along side the 600-foot container ship. "Following the rescue of the migrants, we placed the pregnant women and children in ships accommodations while sheltering the remainder of the survivors on the deck, protected by the containers. We provided medical attention to the ill, food and blankets and notified [FRONTEX](#) of the rescue," reported the ship's captain to the Amver center.

The Joanna safely transferred the 105 survivors to Italian authorities the following day.

The Joanna, managed by [Eurobulk](#) of Greece, enrolled in Amver on November 2, 2001.

The captain and crew of the Joanna will be recognized during the AFRAS Capitol Hill maritime search and rescue awards ceremony in Washington DC, Sep. 13. The event will be hosted by

Congressman Jason Lewis (R-MN) and is coordinated by the board and officers of AFRAS. The Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as other senior maritime and congressional officials, will

also attend. The Amver Award was established in 1996 and is presented to a merchant vessel that is part of the world-wide Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue System, for recognition in taking part in a heroic rescue at sea anywhere

in the world.

Three U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliaries, working with on-scene civilians with

CHAIRMAN'S AWARD WINNER

medical experience, medevaced a man with severe injuries at Quilomene Creek - part of Washington state's Columbia River - Sep. 3, 2017.

Auxiliarists Kathleen Goodwin (boat coxswain) and Steven Beckerman (crewman) were on patrol in the area - Auxiliarist Jan Jenne was shoreside, working in a communications relay role - when a woman approached them on a jet ski who reported that a man had been seriously injured and needed help.

Goodwin and Beckerman were taken to the area, and once on-scene discovered that the man had suffered a head injury, which knocked him unconscious, and he had



floated in the water for an undetermined amount of time, after using a 35-foot tall makeshift waterslide.

A large crowd of bystanders had gathered, and some in the crowd with medical experience were providing assistance – the man had been recovered from the water, placed on a boogie board to provide spinal support and a makeshift cervical collar had been improvised. Goodwin and Beckerman put in a call to Jenne to arrange for an ambulance at the nearest area that it could access it – 20 minutes from the scene of the injury – and they prepared to safely medevac the man. One bystander, who had been a military trauma nurse, came aboard to assist during the medevac. During the high-speed transit to the determined rendezvous spot with the ambulance, the man was semi-conscious, had movement in his extremities, his lungs

were clear and he had a rapid heartbeat. At one point, however, he started to bubble blood out of his mouth and nose.

Emergency medical technicians from volunteer fire department were awaiting the patient at the pre-determined location, and took over providing medical care.

Instead of transporting the patient via ambulance, a decision had been made to further medevac him to a care center via Life Flight helicopter. The auxiliaries learned the next day that the man had been further transferred, because of the extent of his injuries, to a level one trauma center in Seattle, where it was expected he would remain in ICU for five-seven days. He

suffered a fracture to the back of the skull, a broken nose, broken cheekbones and bleeding on the brain.

Coast Guard Auxiliarists Goodwin, Beckerman and Jenne will be recognized during the AFRAS Capitol Hill maritime search and rescue awards ceremony in Washington DC, Sep. 13. The event will be hosted by Congressman Jason Lewis (R-MN) and is coordinated by the board and officers of AFRAS. The Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as other senior maritime and congressional officials, will also attend.

The AFRAS Chairman's Award was established in 2014 and is awarded to a Coast Guard Auxiliarist (or a team of Coast Guard Auxiliarists) from among the nominations received for the AFRAS Silver Medal, when and only when, all nominations for the Silver Medal do not meet the criteria for the award of the AFRAS

Silver Medal (which are the same criteria as the VADM Thomas Sargent III Gold Medal awarded to a Coast Guard enlisted member). A life must be in peril of being lost, whether at sea, on a river, or a lake, and a Coast Guard Auxiliarist (or team of Coast Guard Auxiliarists) must have had a direct impact on saving the life, or attempting to save the life in peril – from a watercraft, from land, or a pier, wharf or jetty connected to dry land.



VICE ADMIRAL THOMAS R. SARGENT III GOLD MEDAL AWARD WINNERS

We have selected two U.S. Coast Guard rescuers to receive the Vice Admiral Thomas R. Sargent III Gold Medal this year.

Aviation Survival Technician First Class Matthew Silvius, of Air Station Clearwater, Fla., was the rescue swimmer aboard a Coast Guard helicopter that rescued two people aboard a sailboat foundering in the outer bands of the Category 4 Hurricane Irma Sep. 9, 2017. Aviation Survival Technician Third Class Brendan Kiley, of Air Station Cape Cod, Mass., was a helicopter rescue swimmer deployed with a crew to the Houston area during Hurricane Harvey, where they rescued 112 people and assisted an untold number more during a three-day period in August 2017.

Petty Officer Silvius is cited for his heroic achievement while serving as the rescue swimmer aboard Coast Guard helicopter CG-6007. Despite knowing refuel and emergency divert airfields were unavailable, he volunteered to fly 420 miles into Hurricane Irma to rescue two mariners from the sailing vessel On Caval as it foundered in the outer bands of the powerful storm.

Arriving on scene, he learned that one of the survivors had abandoned ship and was attempting to row a five-foot dingy to land. With near zero visibility, at night, in torrential rains and 45 to 60 knot winds, he deployed into the water to begin his rescue efforts. While being dragged by the helicopter as it fought to maintain position in the violent winds, he fought his way to the panicked survivor. Quickly realizing the dingy was on the verge of capsizing, he made a split-second decision to transfer the combative survivor into the water. Despite the extreme weather conditions and wildly struggling victim, he quickly employed the rescue strop to execute a safe hoist to the helicopter.

Racing against the strengthening storm and as fuel became critical, Petty Officer Silvius immediately redeployed to retrieve the second survivor from a storm-tossed life raft as it was blown further out to sea. Petty Officer Silvius' heroic actions and life-saving skills were instrumental in the rescue of two people who otherwise would not have survived the historic storm.

Petty Officer Kiley is cited for extraordinary heroism while serving as a rescue swimmer in support of Hurricane Harvey relief efforts, Aug. 27-29, 2017. This category 4 hurricane released more precipitation than any other storm system in U.S. history, discharging as much as 52 inches of rain throughout 28,000 square miles of Texas and flooding much of the city of Houston.

Braving the outer bands of the hurricane, the crew of CGNR 6026 flew through extreme precipitation, heavy lightning and tropical storm force winds in excess of 50 knots to reposition from Lafayette, LA to Houston, TX. Tasking was difficult due to the sheer number of 911 calls coming in for assistance and the vast area of flooding, forcing the pilots to use their smart phones to navigate to street addresses to hoist survivors in dire distress from windows, roofs and tops of submerged cars.

Deploying 18 times from over 100' to avoid hazardous trees and live power lines, and battling severe mechanical turbulence in excess of 40 knots and torrential rain, he assisted entire city blocks of survivors desperately seeking assistance. Often working alone, he put children and the old or frail onto his back and swam them through rushing floodwaters to the awaiting helicopter.

Once, while positioning a survivor for a hoist, Petty Officer Kiley turned to see a semi-truck barreling towards him with water up to the cab. He grabbed the survivor just in time to pull him out of harm's way before the truck passed, barely missing them both. Waived down by an anxious survivor, he entered an unlit house filled with brown, putrid water and cluttered with floating objects. In the back room, a woman lay on a hospital bed with floodwater already over the mattress. With battery powered medical equipment still operating, Petty Officer Kiley was shocked multiple times as he struggled to bring the elderly woman outside for the hoist.

On another occasion, he deftly climbed onto a roof where a woman desperately held a rubber storage bin, inside which were her toddler and newborn baby trying to stay dry. Remarkably, he was able to carefully carry the bin down from the roof before helping the mother down and arranging all three in the basket for the hoist.



Petty Officer Kiley's remarkable stamina, adaptability and heroism were instrumental in hoisting and saving the lives of 112 people during 21.3 hours of operational relief efforts.

Petty Officers Silvius and Kiley will be recognized during the AFRAS Capitol Hill maritime search and rescue awards ceremony in Washington DC, Sep. 13. The event will be hosted by Congressman Jason Lewis (R-MN) and is coordinated by the board and officers of AFRAS. The Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as other senior maritime and congressional officials, will also attend.

The AFRAS Gold Medal (The VADM Thomas Sargent III Gold Medal) was initially awarded in 1982 and firmly established for annual presentation since 1987. First called "The AFRAS Gold Medal," its name was changed in 2009 to honor the Association's first Chairman, VADM Thomas Sargent III, a former Vice Commandant of the United States Coast Guard. The prestigious award is presented annually to a Coast Guard enlisted man or woman for an act of extraordinary bravery during a rescue at sea.



Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater, Florida, crewmembers Petty Officer 1st Class Matthew W. Silvius, an aviation survival technician, and Petty Officer 2nd Class Jean A. Medina, an aviation maintenance technician hold up their Air Medal citations after an awards ceremony at the air station July, 3, 2018. Silvius and Medina were honored for rescuing two people from a sailboat during Hurricane Irma in 2017. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Ashley J. Johnson)

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AFRAS is also pleased to announce that it presented its C-PORT Award in January for an act of extraordinary skill and determination in saving a life in the maritime environment. This year's award was presented to: **CAPTAIN NATHAN LINS** of TowBoat U.S. Catalina

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