
AFRAS NEWS



SUMMER 2017

ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA, INC.

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ANNUAL AFRAS SEARCH AND RESCUE AWARD WINNERS SELECTED FOR HONORS



U.S. Coast Guard photo by Thomas Sperduto

Our annual Capitol Hill SAR awards ceremony is just around the corner – Sept. 26 – and the Board of Directors is pleased to announce the recipients for each award category.

Individuals and crews made dramatic rescues that span the globe – from the Gulf of Mexico to the Ionian Sea to stormy waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Search and Rescue Award Winners (cont.)

Throughout Spring and early Summer, the board reviewed nomination packages for the gamut of our award categories: the Vice Admiral Thomas Sargent III Gold Medal, Amver Award, Chairman's Award and our newest category, the Cruise Ship Humanitarian Assistance Award, for rescues performed by cruise ship crews around the globe.

GOLD MEDAL



The Motor Lifeboat Invincible II, from Coast Guard Station Grays Harbor, Wash. U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Jacob M. Hylkema earned the Gold Medal for a heroic rescue in rough seas off the Washington state coast, risking his own life to save another.

Hylkema, a Boatswain's Mate at Station Grays Harbor, Wash., was a crewmember aboard the Motor Lifeboat Invincible II and was instrumental in saving the life of a sail boat captain during a challenging rescue in driving rain, 40-50 knot winds and 16-18-foot breaking seas

Late at night in October, the master of the sailboat Grace requested Coast Guard assistance after being beset by weather. The crew of the Invincible got underway with the intention to escort the Grace across the bar and into port. After the Coast Guard crew arrived on scene, they assessed the situation and concluded that not only was an escort not the safest decision, but both a tow and an alongside transfer were out of the question – the sail boat captain would have to don a survival suit, with strobe light, and get in the water after being passed a life ring via heaving line from the Coast Guard crew. Things did not go as planned.

The sail boat captain placed himself in the life ring, but the Coast Guard crew quickly realized that the heaving line was still attached when the captain entered the water. The line became entangled in the sail boat's rigging, and then the captain's legs became entangled in the line under water. The line was pulling the victim under, and the life ring was the only thing keeping his head above water.

Hylkema reportedly yelled, "We need to cut him free – I need to go," as the Coast Guard coxswain maneuvered the rescue boat closer to the man, now in danger of drowning.

Hylkema acted fast, jumping into the water without rescue swimmer gear or a tending line back to the Invincible. He swam more than 150 feet to reach the victim in the stormy seas and cut him free from the heaving line. Hylkema kept the victim in the life ring as the Invincible crew pulled them alongside.

The sail boat captain was so exhausted, that pulling him aboard Invincible required all three crewmembers remaining onboard, which meant the coxswain had to leave the helm and throttles to complete the rescue. Hylkema had to push himself away from the pitching and rolling rescue boat to protect himself – into the darkness, and wind and seas that carried him further and further from his shipmates and safety. After recovering the victim, Invincible's crew used their expert seamanship skills to recover Hylkema from the water and return safely to port.



AMVER AWARD



Coast Guard Capt. Edward Marohn and Ben Strong, a representative from the Automated Mutual-Assistance Vessel Rescue System, or AMVER, present the crew of the K. Coral with an AMVER pennant in New Haven, Connecticut, June 27, 2016. AMVER is a voluntary, worldwide search and rescue assistance program sponsored by the Coast Guard. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer Steven Strohmaier.

The Amver participating ship K. Coral rescued 19 fishermen after they abandoned their burning vessel nearly 900 miles southeast of Bermuda in June 2016.

The Panamanian-flagged ship notified rescue personnel in Bermuda that they had spotted a large cloud of black smoke four miles from their position. The master of the K. Coral altered course and found a fishing vessel on fire with people in the water.

The Bermuda officials notified the U.S. Coast Guard who activated the Amver system and diverted two more ships, whose crews assisted in the search for people in the water.

"While we were hoisting the 17 people onto our ship, two people on a makeshift raft got separated from the group and drifted away," said the captain of the K. Coral. The ships' crews continued searching for the two remaining survivors for six hours.

Lookouts on the K. Coral spotted the last two people and hoisted the first survivor to safety, but lost sight of the second person in the darkness and heavy rain. "The final survivor is clinging to some debris so we know he's alive and we won't give up!" the captain of the K. Coral reported to Coast Guard authorities.

Two hours later, the last survivor, the master of the fishing vessel, was aboard the K. Coral. The crew of the K. Coral reported two of the survivors suffered third degree burns and were being treated in the ship's hospital and that the K. Coral was sailing towards Bermuda so a helicopter could meet the ship and evacuate the injured survivors.

The K. Coral, now named EM Coral, is managed by SK Shipping Company Ltd. and enrolled in Amver on September 26, 2011, and has earned two Amver participation awards.



By —XEON— (http://www.panoramio.com/photo/124811628) [CC BY 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0)], via Wikimedia Commons



AMVER SPECIAL AWARDS



Amver-participating vessels completed so many rescues during 2016 that the AFRAS Board of Directors decided that, in addition to the Amver Award for the EM Coral, two additional awards were merited for ship crews this year.

The tanker Orfeas' crew rescued four French sailors from a disabled 50-foot sailboat in heavy seas more than 1,000 miles east of Puerto Rico in December.

The rescue operation started after authorities in Forte de France contacted U.S. Coast Guard personnel in San Juan about the disabled sailboat requesting assistance after their rudder failed.

U.S. rescue authorities utilized an Amver Surface Picture to locate and contact the 748-foot crude oil tanker, which was approximately 250 miles away from the sailboat. The captain of the Orfeas immediately agreed to divert and assist the sailors.

The Bahamian-flagged tanker was able to safely embark the four French yachtsmen despite 40-knot winds and 16-foot seas. The survivors were uninjured and remained on the Orfeas until it reached its next port of call in Gibraltar.

The Amver-participating bulk carrier Eastern Confidence rescued 41 migrants from a boat that capsized in the Mediterranean Sea in April.

The Philippines-flagged ship was alerted to the distress by the Greek Coast Guard and steamed to the distress location.

The BBC reported the migrants were on a voyage from Libya to Europe when they were transferred from one overloaded boat to another more-overcrowded boat. At some point, the wooden boat capsized, killing at least 500 people.

The 554-foot cargo ship embarked the survivors, mostly from Africa, and disembarked them in Greece.

CHAIRMAN'S AWARD

This year's Chairman's Award will be presented to two U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliarists who came to the aid of a sail boarder in distress on the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest.

Auxiliarists Brian Rollins and Scott Robson, of Flotilla 73, were on a regatta patrol on the river to ensure the safety of participants in the Columbia Gorge Paddle Challenge event. During the patrol, Rollins and Robson received a report of a sail boarder in distress on a different part of the river – Rollins, the coxswain, located the distressed person struggling to pull her sail board to the Oregon shore in 5-6-foot seas.

“Help, don't leave me! I need help!”

Once on scene, they witnessed three large waves wash over and push the victim under water. As Rollins carefully maneuvered his vessel as close as possible to the victim, she reportedly called out to the Auxiliarists, "Help, don't leave me! I need help!"

Robson was able to throw a line to the victim, despite the 20-knot sustained winds, and pulled her alongside the boat while Rollins minded his helm and throttles in the rough conditions. Once alongside, it took both men to haul the exhausted victim aboard the rescue boat, then Rollins had to quickly get back to the controls to re-start the engines and keep the vessel into the wind and waves to prevent taking a wave broadside. Rollins and Robson then returned the victim safely back to port. They will be presented their award at the Coast Guard Auxiliary's national convention, in Orlando, Fla., in late August.

CRUISE SHIP HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AWARDS



The cruise ship Brilliance of the Seas.

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Last year AFRAS partnered with the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) to honor cruise ship crews who save lives at sea. "Cruise ships and other passenger vessels have a long history of helping those in trouble at sea," said AFRAS Chairman Dana Goward. "Cruising is the only exposure many people have to maritime. When a cruise ship with thousands of passengers goes out of its way to help those in peril, it is not only adhering to the highest traditions of the sea and saving lives. It is providing a direct object lesson to everyone on board about how the sea and its dangers can bond us in our common humanity irrespective of national borders and other differences."

This year's inaugural Cruise Ship Humanitarian Assistance Award honorees embody the ideals of mariners helping mariners, with not one, but two awards. One recognizes an exceptionally alert crew who detected and responded to a previously unknown distress and saved 18 lives that would have otherwise surely been lost. The other is for a crew who, when called upon to assist, already had all the procedures, equipment, and training in place to conduct the most professionally executed mass rescue by a cruise ship the AFRAS board of directors had ever seen.

On an early March 2016 morning, 27 souls left Cuba in a makeshift boat. Outbound, they hit a reef, putting a hole in their boat. Sixteen days later, 18 of them were still alive – adrift in the Gulf of

Mexico, dehydrated and suffering from exposure to the sun and saltwater – when the faint "blip" of their boat was picked up on the radar on the bridge of Royal Caribbean International's ship Brilliance of the Seas. Rescue personnel from the ship went into action after lookouts reported cries for help and the ship's captain ordered a rescue boat be launched to assess the situation.

The boat was listing and in danger of capsizing. While the ship's rescue boat coxswain carefully maneuvered toward the disabled craft, the captain and crew aboard the 958-foot Brilliance of the Seas positioned the ship upwind, with care taken to prevent the damaged boat from entering the ship's azipods' or thrusters' wash.

"Once I realized the condition of the people in the boat, I relayed this to the crew involved in the rescue, which then was carried out with a single-minded determination to rescue the lives of these people," said the captain. "It reminded me of crews rescued after long lifeboat journeys during WWII that I have read about. For myself, I have a long career at sea behind me and have rescued people before, but this stands out as by far the most difficult and delicate I have encountered," he said.

The Brilliance of the Seas crew kept their guests safe and the medical team provided around-the-clock care for the survivors until the ship arrived in Cozumel and they were transferred to awaiting medical personnel.

On the morning of May 11, 2016, the crew of Norwegian Cruise Line's 879-foot Norwegian Spirit received an urgent message from the Rome Rescue Coordination Center, while underway with passengers in the Ionian Sea. The RCC needed help from the crew of the cruise ship with an overloaded ship full of refugees, about two hours from the Norwegian Spirit's position.

The crew steamed toward the position passed by Rome, located the ship – a small cargo vessel – and stood by until a nearby Finnish Coast Guard ship could arrive on-scene, per instructions from the RCC.



Search and Rescue Award Winners (cont.)

When the Finnish Coast Guard crew was rescuing the refugees from the cargo ship, they discovered one that needed immediate medical attention, a woman who was 36 weeks pregnant. They quickly took action to get her help, in coordination with the cruise ship crew.

The Coast Guard crew screened the woman and her brother, and then transported them via small boat to the Norwegian Spirit.



The cruise ship Norwegian Spirit.

Photo by Karelj (Own work) [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>) or CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

During a medical check and security screening once aboard the cruise ship, the crew discovered that the 23-year-old pregnant woman and her brother had been at sea for two weeks with the other refugees aboard the ship. The RCC arranged for a medevac helicopter, which landed aboard the cruise ship to transfer the woman and her brother to a hospital in Italy. The ship's doctor accompanied them, to

provide continuing medical care and monitoring while enroute. While eventually not necessary, crew and spaces were quickly prepared to care for 300 refugees potentially taken aboard Norwegian Spirit, with medical, food, water and rest areas separated from guest spaces.

UPDATE FROM THE AFRAS PRESIDENT

Charles "Skip" Bowen, AFRAS President

I am pleased to announce that we will be honoring Coast Guard Petty Officer Jacob Hylkema, who while serving as a crewmember of the Motor Lifeboat Invincible II, out of Grays Harbor, Wash., acted as the surface swimmer in 18-20-foot breaking seas to save the master of a sailing vessel entangled in his own vessel's lines.

Petty Officer Hylkema conducted this mission at great risk to his own life and we are proud to honor him at our annual reception on Capitol Hill, Sept. 26.

We will also be honoring two Amver-participating ship crews for rescues in the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, and two cruise ship crews for their quick action to save lives in the Gulf of Mexico and the Ionian Sea. We're also presenting the Chairman's Award to a U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary crew who rescued a sail boarder in the Pacific Northwest's Columbia River.

Our Association continues to do great things to support volunteer search and rescue worldwide. This past year, with your support, we were able to provide substantial assistance to the

Hellenic Rescue Team and the Migrant Offshore Aid Station, through the International Maritime Rescue Foundation. We also provided support to the Dominica Naval Auxiliary and the Tanzania Sea Rescue startup.



I want to thank all of our generous donors – in particular the TATMAN Foundation – for making this possible.

Last, but not least, we made a change from the longstanding AFRAS logo to a more modern logo, which reflects the current efforts of the Association around the world. Along with the logo the AFRAS website has a new look! Please check it out at www.afras.org



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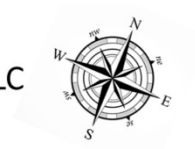
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AFRAS provides you with a means of supporting world volunteer maritime search and rescue services with a U.S. tax-deductible donation.

AFRAS offers two basic membership packages:

The first, a joint membership with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) for dues of \$100 per year. We will send you periodic AFRAS newsletters, press releases, and an invitation to our annual Gold Medal/Silver Medal/Amver award ceremony in Washington, D.C.

The second, a sole AFRAS membership for \$20 per year will entitle you to all AFRAS mailings including newsletters, press releases and miscellaneous information from our counterparts throughout the world.

All dues and donations given through AFRAS are tax deductible in the United States.

If you are interested in joining AFRAS, please fill out the information below and send along with your dues/donation to (or, make a donation at www.afras.org/donation.html)

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