

# **THE ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA**

## **C-PORT Award**

**2014**

### **Presented to:**

**Captain Bob Macko of TowBoatUS, Buffalo**

On June 10, 2014, TowBoatU.S. Buffalo Captain Bob Macko was heading from Sturgeon Point Marina to the Small Boat Harbor in Buffalo to swap boats for maintenance when a fishing vessel off Eighteen Mile Creek called the Coast Guard on Ch. 16 to report they witnessed a vessel capsize in about 35 feet of water with 3 people in the water.

Captain Macko immediately stopped his boat, looked around and had a visual on the boat as the Coast Guard was trying to obtain information from the fishing vessel. The fishing vessel saw the towing vessel and told the Coast Guard they would circle the people until the vessel was on site.

Working with one hand heavily bandaged from an injury received previously, Captain Macko did his best to communicate with Coast Guard and to maneuver his vessel to the persons in the water.

As he went to retrieve the people, he saw none of them were wearing life jackets. Even though it was early June, Lake Erie was about 55 degrees due to delayed ice melt in the area and Captain Macko knew hypothermia could have set in fast.

With the immediate response, the people were only in the water for 5 to 7 minutes and had no injuries. Captain Macko, using one hand, carefully unpinned and deployed the heavy boarding ladder attached to his towboat and lowered it into the water.

With all successfully safe onboard, Captain Macko brought them back to Sturgeon Point Marina to dry land. Coast Guard assistance was still 20 minutes from the scene.

There is no doubt that Captain Macko's fast response, dedication to the boating public and disregard for his physical condition, contributed to the saving of these lives.