



NEWS RELEASE

August 20, 2020
Contact: Kathleen Taormina
1-800-346-2368
kathleen.taormina@naemt.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAEMT Announces the 2020 Recipients of the EMS Advocate of the Year Awards

Clinton, Miss. – The National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians (NAEMT) is pleased to announce the 2020 EMS Advocate of the Year Award recipients who will be recognized on September 15 at the virtual NAEMT General Membership Meeting. This award recognizes EMS professionals whose volunteer efforts advance EMS through educating and engaging elected government leaders, EMS and healthcare communities, and the public. NAEMT congratulates and thanks these recipients for their determined support on behalf of the EMS profession and our patients!

Daniel Owens, Paramedic (Texas)

Daniel Owens works at Austin-Travis County EMS, serves as NAEMT's Advocacy Coordinator for Texas, is a member of the Austin EMS Association Research Committee, and volunteers as the executive director for the Association of Texas EMS Professionals. When his state EMS association was in danger of folding, Owens led efforts to rebuild the organization. He worked with state legislators and unified EMS support for a bill to grant paramedics college tuition exemptions, testified before the state Senate, and has visited over 50 legislative offices to build support for EMS legislation. Owens has also been featured on the Fox TV show, *First Responders Live*.

Aidan O'Connor, Paramedic, Flight Paramedic (New York)

Aidan O'Connor has served as an NAEMT Advocacy Coordinator. He has attended EMS On The Hill Day several times, as well as advocacy events in his state. He actively communicates with his network of EMS professionals through social media to build support for EMS legislation in his state. He has spoken at state and national EMS conferences on the "ABCs of Change: Advocacy Before Complaining," which gives advice on turning problems into solutions by way of advocacy. O'Connor believed so deeply in the importance of advocacy that he ran for public office. He served three years as the minority leader of the Greene County Legislature in Durham, New York. During his time in office, he served on the county Health Services, Resources and Economic Development committees. While in the legislature, he advocated for more funding for EMS and taught his colleagues hands-only CPR and how to use an AED. He also secured funds to place 27 public access defibrillators strategically throughout the county.

--more--

Brian Oftedal, Fire Captain (California)

Brian Oftedal is a fire captain for the city of Oakland. As president of the board for the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District, he has worked to engage elected officials at the local, state and federal levels. Specific initiatives include: establishing a quarterly update with their House Representative; implementing a policy requiring all board members to participate in engaging and educating residents and elected officials about events, meetings and district goals; and mentoring his colleagues in advocacy strategies. Oftedal created a partnership with organizations to add and register public access defibrillators, advocated for California state laws to increase access to peer support for first responders, and has initiated community events.

Nominations for this award are evaluated on the extent to which the nominee effectively advocates for the passage of EMS legislation by:

- Educating elected government leaders at the local, state or federal levels on the components of the legislation and how it supports the ability of EMS to provide quality patient care.
- Building strong relationships with the elected officials and their staff who have influence over the passage of EMS legislation.
- Educating fellow EMS professionals about EMS legislation; how the legislation would impact the ability of EMS to provide quality patient care; the importance of advocating for the legislation; and how to effectively advocate.
- Engaging members of the EMS profession in advocacy activities in support of the legislation.

The 2020 EMS Advocate of the Year Award recipients are commended for their tremendous efforts to advance EMS care and sincerely thanked for their service to their communities, states and nation.

About NAEMT

Formed in 1975 and more than 72,000 members strong, the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians is the only national association representing the professional interests of all emergency and mobile healthcare practitioners, including emergency medical technicians, advanced emergency medical technicians, emergency medical responders, paramedics, advanced practice paramedics, critical care paramedics, flight paramedics, community paramedics, and mobile integrated healthcare practitioners. NAEMT members work in all sectors of EMS, including government agencies, fire departments, hospital-based ambulance services, private companies, industrial and special operations settings, and in the military.

#