



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 15, 2017

2017 National EMS Awards of Excellence Recipients Announced

Clinton, Miss. – NAEMT and EMS World are pleased to announce the recipients of the 2017 *National EMS Awards of Excellence*. The awards will be presented during NAEMT's General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 17, in Las Vegas, Nevada, and on Oct. 18, during EMS World Expo's opening ceremony. We congratulate the following recipients and recognize their outstanding contributions to the EMS profession and the patients they serve:

Terry Bottjen, Paramedic, Faith, South Dakota
2017 NAEMT/Nasco Paramedic of the Year, *sponsored by Nasco*

Ryan Houser, EMT, Morristown, New Jersey
2017 NAEMT/Braun Industries EMT of the Year, *sponsored by Braun Industries*

Jacob Ponczkowski, Sergeant, U.S. Army, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington State
2017 NAEMT/North American Rescue Military Medic of the Year,
sponsored by North American Rescue

Ginny Renkiewicz, Paramedic, Fayetteville, North Carolina
2017 NAEMT/Jones & Bartlett Learning EMS Educator of the Year,
sponsored by Jones & Bartlett Learning

Allina Health EMS, St. Paul, Minnesota
2017 Dick Ferneau Career EMS Service of the Year, *sponsored by Ferno*

Greenlawn Fire Dept. EMS, Greenlawn, New York
2017 Volunteer EMS Service of the Year, *sponsored by ZOLL*

Terry Bottjen is certified as a paramedic in South Dakota and nationally. He has served in EMS for 37 years in ground and air ambulance agencies and as an educator. Terry has volunteered over 50,000 hours of service, earning him the South Dakota Governor's Volunteer Award and the JC Penny Golden Rule Volunteer of the Year Award. He is also an experienced Scuba rescue diver. Terry has received commendation letters from state and federal leaders and recognitions locally. Through personal experience, Terry saw the challenges of EMS in remote areas so he began his own volunteer first responder unit to more expediently transport patients. It was headquartered in his home. At his own expense, Terry later bought an ambulance and began the volunteer Hill City Ambulance Service, which after a few years was donated to the community. Terry is also a Pastor and believes that EMS practitioners are the hands of God every time they reach out to help patients. Colleague Wes Heidlebaugh remarked, "With all his leadership and lifesaving skills, the thing that impresses me most about Terry is his compassion." Erik Twite said, "Terry is one who more than exhibits exactly what EMS stands for."

-- more --

Ryan Houser has worked in EMS since age 16. He is driven to help others and has aspirations of becoming a neurosurgeon, working in federal law enforcement, and advancing the field of tactical medicine. Ryan is a volunteer EMT for Morris Minute Men EMS (Morristown, NJ) and as Assistant Captain helps with operational readiness and recruitment, chairing the agency's membership and equipment committees. Ryan is creating awareness videos to benefit community education and encourage agency volunteers. Ryan attends Rutgers University full time, is certified as a firefighter, with Morris Township FD, and is an instructor of terrorism response courses. Ryan is an EMT for Cedar Knolls FD and Morris County OEM, serves on judiciary committees to support juveniles, and works at Morristown Medical Center as an Emergency Technician. "Ryan dedicates considerable time to his pursuit of providing exceptional patient care to individuals in the prehospital and hospital setting," said colleague Kendall Sarson. "Ryan has truly modeled his entire life around helping others, whether patient or peer, and his work as an EMT has become one of the most significant parts of his identity," Sarson continued.

Sgt. Jacob Ponczkowski serves in the U.S. Army 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, as a military combat medic. He is also a paramedic. Most recently, Sgt. Ponczkowski was honored with a Bronze Star Medal with Valor for efforts to support Operation Freedom Sentinel in Afghanistan. The Joint Task Force citation read: Sgt. Ponczkowski's poise while under direct fire undoubtedly saved the lives of his fellow rangers and directly contributed to the success of the task force. Dr. Charles Moore, medical director and physician, wrote: "Sgt. Ponczkowski (Ponch) has continuously set the example of what a Medic is and should be. On one particular night in Afghanistan, Sgt. Ponch heroically put his life in peril as he fought through enemy fire to save the life of a U.S. advisor." Dr. Moore also remarked that Sgt. Ponczkowski has impressive medical ability and knowledge, and is a great soldier who trains himself and helps others to go above and beyond the standard. Sgt. Ponczkowski has earned the Expert Field Medical Badge, is qualified as a Dive Medical Technician, is a graduate of Ranger School, and has advanced instructor certifications.

Ginny Renkiewicz has devoted the past 17 years to advancing her education, the instruction of others, and to enhancing her patient care skills in the service of her community. Husband Adam Renkiewicz, CPT, CA, Dept. of the Army Civil-Military Operations, nominated Ginny in recognition of her sacrifice and dedication to advancing the levels of education and research within the EMS profession. Ginny is in the process of earning her Ph.D. in Health Science and specializing in respiratory care. She holds numerous certifications, has received several national awards, is widely published and a conference presenter, and devotes personal time to her students. Ginny "is an educator of the highest order and has been responsible for developing some of the finest paramedics with whom I've had the pleasure to work," remarked Howard (Skip) Kirkwood, Jr., formerly of Wake County EMS. Kevin Collopy of AirLink/VitaLink Critical Care Transport said, Ginny "is one of the few prehospital education professionals who not only inspires young paramedics, but also grows and inspires developing and accomplished educators."

Nominees for the Paramedic and EMT of the Year Awards are scored on how the nominee: provides superior patient care; is an effective advocate for patients and their families; works with peers to foster a positive work environment; demonstrates professionalism in interacting with patients, their families and other medical professionals; and demonstrates a commitment to continuing professional education.

Nominees for the Military Medic of the Year Award are recognized military medics (MOS-qualified active, reserve or National Guard U.S. Army Medic, Navy Corpsman or Air Force Medic) who demonstrate excellence in the performance of military emergency medicine, with their primary role being that of theater patient care.

Nominations for the Educator of the Year Award are scored on how the nominee: consistently demonstrates commitment to providing high quality, professional education for EMS practitioners; serves as an outstanding role model for EMS practitioners in the classroom and in the community; effectively mentors EMS students at all stages of their professional development; introduces and incorporates innovative approaches and tools in the classroom, which enhance students' learning experiences; and contributes and participates in the development of education content that expands the body of quality EMS curriculum.

-- more --

Allina Health EMS serves more than 100 Minnesota communities and employs nearly 570 paramedics, EMTs, dispatchers, special transportation drivers, maintenance and administration and support personnel. Services include priority medical dispatch, 9-1-1 pre-arrival instructions, emergency and non-emergency ambulance response, the Greater Minnesota Ride program and wheelchair transport. In 2017, to support the development of evidence-based practice, Allina Health EMS added an in-house epidemiologist and a manager of EMS analytics to expand research, analysis and interpretation of information. In 2015, Allina's communications center became one of only 144 dispatch centers in the world to achieve accreditation by the International Academy of Emergency Dispatch. Allina launched a mobile integrated health (MIH) project to reduce the number of readmission and ED visits for patients with mental health issues or frequent hospital readmissions for CHF, COPD or cardiac conditions. In 2015, the agency conducted the first Allina Health EMS Freedom House EMT class to recruit and train inner-city St. Paul residents as EMTs.

Greenlawn Fire Dept. EMS in Greenlawn, New York, serves a population of 25,000 with a staff of 38 EMTs and 3 paramedics. The agency runs 2300 emergency calls per year and does not bill for services. The department recently acquired a Lifenet system to transmit 12-lead EKGs directly to the hospital to decrease door-to-balloon times in cardiac emergencies. EMTs are all trained in 12-lead EKG acquisition and transmission to the hospital. The agency also recently implemented a "check and inject" program of epinephrine in cases of anaphylactic shock. Staff wellness is a priority, as the district constructed a gym that's free for all members and instituted mandatory annual physicals for EMS staff. Greenlawn Fire Dept. EMS is currently equipping all vehicles in the fleet with a stretcher loading system and power stretchers to ensure caregiver safety. Twice annually, the department holds a patient "lifting and moving" class. Greenlawn recently instituted a CPR campaign with community outreach to help residents wishing to get Heartsaver certified. During EMS week, the rescue squad hosts activities to introduce the public to what EMS is and to educate them on calling 9-1-1. The agency consistently brings educational programs to elementary and high schools to help raise awareness of emergency medical services.

Nominees for the Service of the Year Awards are scored on the following: advances in EMS education and training in the agency; innovations in prehospital care and protocol development implemented by the agency; medical community involvement with the agency; EMS system/program upgrades implemented by the agency; worker safety and well-being programs implemented by the agency; injury- and illness-prevention projects implemented by the agency; and public-education project sponsorships the agency is involved in.

About NAEMT

Formed in 1975 and more than 65,000 members strong, the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians ([NAEMT](#)) is the only national association representing the professional interests of all emergency and mobile 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.

Contact: Kathleen Taormina, Marketing and Media Manager, kathleen.taormina@naemt.org

About EMS World

As the industry's first prehospital publication, *EMS World* has the reputation and body of work EMS providers have trusted for 45 years. With the highest print circulation in the industry, the publication's primary audience is EMS chiefs, administrators and paramedics. As the leading EMS services portal, [EMSWorld.com](#) delivers breaking news 24/7 and exclusive online education and training for all levels of EMS practitioners, as well as the most comprehensive listing of EMS products, services and technologies in the industry.

Contact: Jon Bassett, Editorial Director, jon@emsworld.com