



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Hero Neighbors, First Responder Honored for Lifesaving Efforts

CATHARINE YOUNG February 17, 2016



GENESEO – Two local residents and a member of the Livingston County Sheriff's Office who went above and beyond to help a neighbor in need were honored by Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- 57th District) with Liberty Medals, the highest recognition bestowed by the State Senate.

Chester Gascon, Stephanie Stafford and Sgt. Joseph Breu braved advancing flames and a resisting homeowner to rescue a man from his burning home on East Lake Road last March.

“A hero is someone who perseveres despite overwhelming odds and I can think of no better description for Sgt. Breu, Chester and Stephanie. These three brave individuals stepped forward, and their fearless actions ultimately saved the life of a neighbor – when a tragic outcome likely would otherwise have been the case,” said Senator Young.

The New York State Senate Liberty Medal was established in 2014 as the highest honor a Senator can bestow upon a constituent and is awarded to individuals who have merited special commendation for exceptional, heroic, or humanitarian acts on behalf of their fellow New Yorkers.

A certificate of recognition was also presented to Stephanie Stafford’s daughter, Kaitlyn Walters. Ms. Walters waited outside the home for first responders while her mother and Chester Gascon attempted to extract the homeowner from the residence.

“Stephanie, Chester, and Sgt. Breu epitomize the reasons why the Liberty Medal was created. It’s imperative that we as a state recognize the everyday heroes in our midst. When others see the actions of these three, I hope they are instilled with a sense of pride for our state and will think of them when faced with challenging decisions,” Senator Young said.

“On behalf of the men and women of the Livingston County Sheriff’s Office, I thank Senator Young for recognizing Sergeant Joseph Breu and our residents, Chester Gascon, Stephanie Stafford and Kaitlyn Walters,” stated Sheriff Dougherty. “We are lucky to have courageous Deputy Sheriffs serving our residents and also fortunate to have citizens go above and beyond to help their neighbors.”

Sgt. Joseph Breu said, “I am not only honored to get this award from the Senator, I am also humbled. That day of the fire, I believe we all did what we’re supposed to do for one another. What we did was the right thing to do.”

Around 5p.m. on Sunday, March 8, 2015, flames erupted in the kitchen of a home on East Lake Road in Livonia. Stephanie Stafford and Chester “Chet” Gascon – neighbors who spotted the flames – rushed to assist the home’s resident and found the homeowner unwilling to leave the property.

Despite repeated pleas from Chester and Stephanie, the homeowner continued to refuse their advice to vacate the home ahead of the quickly advancing flames. Livingston County Sheriff’s Office Sgt. Joseph Breu was the initial first responder on scene, arriving just after the call came in to the department. Upon arriving at the home, Sgt. Breu met Chester and Stephanie at the door and joined their efforts to get the homeowner to exit the now fully-engulfed home.

Faced with a still-resisting homeowner, Sgt. Breu and Chester Gascon, who had each begun to feel the effects of the smoke and heat, carried the homeowner from the house to safety. After fire crews arrived on scene, they brought the flames under control with all the heroes safe and the homeowner suffering only minor injuries.

Fire investigators later determined that a frying pan left unattended on the stove was the catalyst of the fire. While the fire resulted in the total loss of the home, further tragedy was prevented thanks to Chester, Stephanie and Sgt. Breu.