



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo presents New York State Senate Liberty Medals

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO July 27, 2021

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NEW HARTFORD - At a special ceremony today at the New Hartford Fire Department, New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, presented New York State Senate Liberty Medals to several individuals who undertook meritorious actions that fire officials believe prevented the tragic loss of life.

The Liberty Medal is one of the highest civilian honors a New Yorker can receive. The award is given to individuals who have merited special commendation for exceptional, heroic, or humanitarian acts and achievements on behalf of their fellow New Yorkers.

Those honored by Sen. Griffo were:

Shawn Reesh and Joseph Phillips

While working for Marshal Przyluke Inc., Reesh and Phillips were in the area of Mapledale Road in New Hartford around 4 a.m. on May 11 when they noticed fire and smoke coming from a nearby garage. Reesh grabbed a fire extinguisher from the truck, ran to the structure and attempted to put out the fire while Phillips alerted the occupants of the home by banging on the front door. The homeowner came to the door, was notified that the garage was on fire and went back in to get his wife and two small children out of the residence. During this time, Reesh called 911 to alert the New Hartford Fire Department.

The fire quickly spread from the attached garage to the home and a vehicle that was in the driveway. When first responders arrived on the scene, they encountered a large volume of fire in the garage and attached structure. New Hartford fire officials said that the situation could have turned tragic if it had not been for the actions of Reesh and Phillips.

Adam Sheldon, Beau Haden and Daniel Cruz

Around 1 a.m. on May 12, the Utica Fire Department was dispatched to a reported structure fire at 1908 Storrs Ave. in Utica. When firefighters arrived at the scene, they found smoke and fire coming from the attic of the structure. Firefighters worked for approximately 30 minutes to get the fire under control.

The department credited the quick actions of Sheldon, Haden and Cruz, CWSI employees, for noticing the smoke coming from the house, calling 911 and waking up the occupants of the residence by pounding on the doors. The occupants of the home were unaware of the fire at the time and were able to safely exit the structure before the fire department arrived. Fire officials said that, without the swift action taken by Sheldon, Haden and Cruz, the outcome

of the fire might have been worse.

“It is an honor to present Shawn, Joseph, Adam, Beau and Daniel with New York State Senate Liberty Medals in recognition of the quick actions they took this past spring that likely averted horrific tragedy and loss of life in Utica and New Hartford,” Sen. Griffo said. “These individuals displayed remarkable courage and initiative and were able to think quickly on their feet while under pressure and are all very deserving of this special recognition.”

“The New Hartford community is grateful for the selfless actions of Shawn Reesh and Joseph Phillips,” New Hartford Fire Chief Scott Nicotera said. “They reacted to a dangerous situation quickly with courage and resolve, facing rapidly spreading flames and assisting a family out of harms way. The New Hartford Fire Department recognizes that Shawn and Joseph’s actions prevented a potential tragedy from happening and are well deserving of today’s award.”