

News from Senator George M. Borrello 57th Senate District

Representing Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and portions of Livingston County

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SENATOR BORRELLO PRESENTS NEW YORK STATE SENATE LIBERTY MEDAL TO DANSVILLE RESIDENT

Diver Sean Needham applauded for quick thinking and heroic rescue in frigid water



Senator Borrello awarded a New York State Senate Liberty Medal to Dansville resident Sean Needham in recognition of his lifesaving rescue of a drowning individual in the Niagara River. From left to right: Senator George Borrello, Sean Needham and Assemblywoman Marjorie Byrnes

GENESEO, NY – A Livingston County resident whose heroic actions helped save the life of a drowning man in the Niagara River was honored in a special presentation at the Livingston County Board of Supervisors meeting today.

Sean Needham was presented with a New York State Senate Liberty Medal for the lifesaving assistance he rendered on December 16, 2021, despite the risks it involved to his own life and safety. The medal is one of the highest civilian honors that a New York resident can receive and involves a months-long application process and approval by the Senate Majority Leader.

Mr. Needham, a commercial diver, was working with other members of the BIDCO Marine Group diving team repairing supports on the Niagara River’s Bird Island Pier when they heard a group of fishermen yelling and running towards the water with a life preserver.

“As soon as they realized someone was in trouble, Sean Needham and his colleagues didn’t hesitate; they sprang into action, jumping into the rescue boat to find the drowning individual. Upon reaching him, he resisted their rescue attempts,” **said Senator Borrello.** “Knowing they only had minutes before hypothermia would take

the man's life, Sean dove into the fast-moving, frigid water where he was able to swim to the victim, get his arms around him, and pull him back to the boat."

Once in the boat, Sean Needham and his fellow divers worked to prevent him from going into shock and hypothermia by dousing him with hot water to raise his body temperature. When they were back on land, EMS took over and transported the man to the hospital.

"Only a courageous and selfless individual would willingly risk his own life to save a stranger. In a situation where minutes meant life or death, Sean Needham didn't flinch; he rose to the challenge and provided lifesaving assistance," said Senator Borrello. "At a time when it can be easy to get discouraged by a steady stream of bad news, Sean is an inspiring reminder that there is still good in the world."

"Sean is a shining example of exemplary courage. Though Sean did not save this man's life for accolades, he is more than deserving of this honor and recognition. He and his colleagues acted in a way that makes all of us proud," said **Assemblywoman Marjorie Byrnes**.

"We were put into a perfect position to help. That river is wild and unforgiving, but that's the excitement of what we do," said **Sean Needham**. "To my friends and colleagues, Rocky Hine and Chris Kunzelman at Bidco Marine, for acting without hesitation, I'll never forget it. To the gentleman who has given me a stronger perspective, I hope I have done the same for you. Just know that there's people who care and are definitely willing to help."

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.

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