



NEWS From -

Conference of Professional Operators for Response Towing

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Lifesaving Awards Presented AFRAS (Association For Rescue At Sea) Honors Two Members of C-PORT with Lifesaving Awards



C-PORT (Conference of Professional Operators for Response Towing) and AFRAS (Association For Rescue At Sea) celebrated and presented its distinguished lifesaving award at the 27th C-PORT Conference held on January 12 – January 14, 2014 at Clearwater Beach, FL. “The excellence of service depicted with this year’s nominations was some of the highest we have seen,” remarked Captain Steve Sawyer, USCG (Ret), President of AFRAS. “It was impossible to select one recipient.” Receiving the award were Captains George Farrell and Daniel Higgins of TowBoatU.S. Yonkers and

Captain Les Trafford of Sea Tow Shinnecock/Moriches. *(Pictured are Steve Sawyer, Les Trafford and Dan Higgins.)*

Tina Cardone, Executive Director of C-PORT added, “The association is thrilled to have two of its members receive this high honor.” Cardone explained that AFRAS established a program, in cooperation with C-PORT, to annually recognize a deserving member of C-PORT that has shown exceptional skill and determination to save lives during a rescue incident in the maritime environment.

On January 27, 2013, Captain George Farrell was at his marina when he heard about a plane crash. Farrell received a phone call from the local police who wanted to know if he had a boat in the water. Since there was ice in the marina, the boat had been hauled two weeks previous. Farrell told the Sergeant that he did not have a boat ready but he would go and take out the Hudson River Pilots boat, as Farrell is a fill-in captain and is familiar with the boat. While Farrell received this call his part time captain, Dan Higgins and two other off duty Police Officers were at the marina unpacking their cars from a ice fishing trip. Farrell explained what happened and all made their way to the Pilot Boat station about three miles away.

Farrell had Higgins pilot the boat while he supervised the deck and crew and assigned lookout positions. Farrell knew the general location of the plane crash and knew they had a full ebb tide going so the victims should be heading their way. They started a search and after several minutes heard a shout for help. They placed the spotlight in that area and observed two people completely immersed in the river wearing life jackets. Higgins piloted the boat in that direction and ring buoys were thrown to the male passenger who was semi conscious. The male passenger was able to grab the ring and was then brought along side and pulled into the boat where first aid was administered.

While half of Farrell’s crew were pulling the male passenger on board, Farrell was continuing to throw a life ring to the female pilot who was obviously in bad shape and not responsive. She would not, or was not able to, grab the ring. Farrell then threw a rope bag at her striking her on her body in an attempt to



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get her attention. This worked, as she was able to grab the rope and bag. She was brought alongside the Pilot Boat and pulled on board where first aid was administered. Both victims were transported to the Pilot Station Dock where Emergency Medical Crews were waiting. The water temperature was 32 degrees and the victims had only a few more minutes to survive. Farrell spoke to the male passenger a few days later and he admits that he was losing it and that he would not have survived more than two more minutes. The victims were both released from the hospital.

On May 12, 2013, Captain Les Trafford was notified by Hampton Bays (NY) Fire Department about a water rescue in the treacherous Shinnecock Inlet. Subsequently, he was updated that the 45foot trawler Pauline IV capsized on the bar with two people onboard. Within 10 minutes, single-handed, Trafford was underway in his 24foot boat arriving at the inlet. The day was bright and sunny; winds were from the SW steady at 20 knots, with gusts of 25-30 knots creating short period 6-12 foot surf on the Shinnecock Inlet bar. Outside the bar, sea conditions were 6-8 feet. In the meantime, the bay constable who also responded turn back due to the rough surf. As Trafford approached the bar, he expertly read the conditions, determined he could make it through the surf zone, and circled ocean side and east of the bar to where the F/V Pauline capsized and was bottom side up leaving a debris field. Remaining in deep water, Trafford searched the east side of the bar; patiently scanned the debris field as best as could be expected while operating a small boat in rough conditions, but did not locate survivors. Shore side observers directed his search to the west of the east-drifting debris field. Again, he found no one, but during that period, a Suffolk County Police helicopter arrived on scene and commenced their search. When near the debris field, the helicopter crew located the deckhand clinging to a lobster buoy 1 mile offshore to the east of the bar, and vectored Trafford to the location for pickup. Demonstrating expert boating boat handling skills, determination and focus, Trafford quickly clipped a life ring to his towline, then maneuvered his boat to within 10 feet of the conscious deckhand and trailed the ring and towline, quickly pulling him on to the boat. Remaining focused on the big picture, Trafford verified there were only two POB on F/V Pauline, and learned the boat's captain never came out of the cabin when it was caught by a large following sea and immediately capsized. Trafford and the deckhand continued to search for F/V Pauline's captain, but finished their efforts when relieved by a Coast Guard 47 Motor Life Boat. Trafford returned the deckhand to shore and delivered him to an awaiting ambulance. Trafford's actions that day led directly to saving the deckhand's life. Tragically, F/V Pauline's captain was later recovered deceased.

"C-PORT congratulates these heroic captains for their efforts in saving these lives," stated Terry Hill, C-PORT Chairman. "Assisting boaters is what we do and it's great to have C-PORT members recognized with such a prestigious award.

C-PORT was founded in 1986 to act as a liaison between the marine assistance industry and public agencies and organizations involved with boating safety, marine assistance, marine salvage and other marine-related operations. Our members are dedicated to providing prompt, professional and timely assistance to all boaters and to actively partner and cooperate with local law enforcement and U.S. Coast Guard. They are professionals, dedicated to the growth and development of their respective businesses and committed to furthering the advancement of our waterways and the boating community. For more information, contact C-PORT at (954) 261-2012 or visit www.cport.us.