2024 EMS Award Recipients

The following individuals have been nominated and will be honored at the 2024 EMS Awards Ceremony on June 4, 2025.

Civilian Award

Dominique Grijalva, Robert Longer

Two people in their 70s were critically injured in a fire at a home on Normington Drive in Sacramento's Northgate neighborhood. A neighbor, Robert Longer, saw the fire and rushed to help. He pulled the male victim to safety, then entered the flames to rescue the wife, using a wet doormat to shield himself from the heat. With help from other neighbors, they carried her to safety, where she was later transported to the hospital. The quick actions of the neighbors were crucial in saving the woman's life.

Christopher Bloch, Kayia Catalan, Coral Dawn-Bloch, Sequoia Dawn-Bloch

On March 10th, Chris Bloch and his daughters, Coral and Sequoia, along with friend Kaiya Catalan, witnessed a couple fall through the ice at Sawmill Pond in South Lake Tahoe. The girls helped the couple by retrieving branches and sleds to pull them from the water, then provided jackets to warm them up while waiting for rescue teams. The couple, who had gone onto the ice to save their dogs, were treated for hypothermia and released. The girls' quick and calm actions were crucial in saving two lives.

Community Service Award

James Tinkelenberg - Southern Trinity Area Rescue

James Tinkelenberg's dedication to EMS education is truly remarkable. With over 30 years of volunteer teaching, he has demonstrated an unwavering passion for training the next generation of EMTs. His ability to engage, motivate, and inspire his students has made a lasting impact on countless EMS professionals. Beyond the classroom, Jim's commitment extends to volunteering as a Paramedic on a rural ambulance, all while balancing a full-time job. His selfless contributions to EMS education and service embody the highest standards of dedication and professionalism.

Mickey Brunelli - City of Merced Fire Department

With over two decades of dedicated service and leadership in emergency medical services (EMS), Mickey has been a transformative force in the City of Merced Fire Department, profoundly improving the quality of EMS care in Merced County and beyond. His commitment to advancing EMS capabilities, fostering key partnerships, and delivering exceptional community service is exemplified in his achievements, particularly in the areas of prehospital care, disaster response, and community health education.

Eric Nixon - San Diego County

Eric C. Nixon has dedicated 13 years to EMS, with eight years as an EMT and five years as the Community Relations and Education Coordinator for AMR in San Diego. His programs, such as CPR in Schools, have taught over 5,000 students life-saving skills, and his child car seat safety initiative has impacted 1,000 children. Eric's community outreach also includes providing 4,000 free blood pressure checks and nearly 1,000 car seat installations. He has donated almost 15,000 hours to community education.

Paige Bowie - Alameda County Fire

Paige Bowie is a UC Berkeley Business School graduate, former professional athlete, and GoRuck competitor who has served with the Alameda County Fire Department since 2005. Now the Division Chief of Special Operations and a Liaison to the City of San Leandro, she is one of fewer than 180 women serving as a Chief Officer among over 380,000 career firefighters in the U.S. In response to community concerns following an officer-involved shooting, Bowie collaborated with city leaders, ACFD administration, and Harvard consultants to develop the Alternative Response Unit (ARU). Launched in November 2024, the ARU—staffed by a nurse practitioner, an ACFD EMT or paramedic, and a Community Health Outreach Worker—has already proven to be a successful and effective model for addressing behavioral health emergencies.

Rose Colangelo - Sutter Health

Rose Colangelo, Emergency Department Director at Sutter Roseville, is dedicated to collaboration within the EMS community. She has led efforts to improve APOT times by building partnerships with multiple LEMSAs, resulting in data-driven improvements and reduced wait times for both patients and EMS personnel. Rose is a respected speaker at EMS conferences and legislative hearings, where she shares her innovative ideas. Her commitment to fostering relationships, educating others, and improving the EMS system has made her a key leader and advocate for positive change.

Distinguished Service Medal

Jack Hansen - American Medical Response - Hemet

Jack Hansen is nominated for the Distinguished Service Medal for his 45 years of service in the Hemet/San Jacinto Valley and Riverside County. Since starting his career on December 5th, 1979, Jack has served as an EMT, Paramedic, Tactical Paramedic, Field Training Officer, Supervisor, and Operations Manager. He was instrumental in founding one of the first Tactical EMS Programs in 1983, which continues to serve Riverside County law enforcement. Jack is highly respected for his mentorship, servant leadership, and unwavering support for EMS crews' wellbeing. He is regarded as a foundational figure in Riverside County's EMS system.

Dustin Ballard - County of Marin

Dr. Ballard has had several EMS medical director roles, all of which have enhanced the care in the prehospital arena.

Katie Pannell - San Rafael Fire Department

Katie has had an immeasurable impact on the EMS community, inspiring countless individuals while continuing to elevate the standard of care in her work. Her career trajectory spans decades of service, education, and leadership, and her contributions to EMS education have been nothing short of exceptional.

Michael Smith - San Manuel Fire

As Vice President of Emergency Services & Tribal Wellness for the San Manuel Fire Department, he has dedicated over 40 years to advancing EMS, particularly within the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians. His achievements include responding to 9/11, creating a Public Health Department and EMS Department, securing a Class 1 ISO rating for the fire department, and advocating for California AB 798, enabling tribal fire departments to provide first-response care. Smith also mentors youth through the California Cadet Corps and supports EMS education at Crafton Hills College. His leadership, service, and innovation make him highly deserving of this recognition.

Elsie Kusel - Alameda County EMSA

Elsie has dedicated decades of service to EMS, playing a vital role in training responders in tactical medicine through high-fidelity simulations. She has also contributed to developing human trafficking education modules and improving EMS reporting protocols. Recently, Elsie created a program identifying high-utilizers in the service area, connecting them with social services to reduce strain on the 911 system. Her innovative approach and relentless dedication have made a significant impact on EMS systems, especially in improving care for society's most vulnerable individuals.

Jon Rudnicki - Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District

Chief Rudnicki's leadership has transformed EMS operations by significantly reducing Ambulance Patient Offload Times, implementing a BLS-tiered system, and driving county-wide protocol improvements. His dedication to EMS excellence, provider recognition, and patient-centered innovation makes him a deserving candidate for this award.

Joe Nakagawa - Hawthorne Police Department

Starting with the Hawthorne Police Department in 2005, he became a full-time officer by 2019, creating life-saving programs for officers, including EMT and TACMED certifications. His leadership as the Medical Director for Los Angeles County's largest ambulance service has ensured the highest care standards. Dr. Nakagawa's innovative training programs have saved lives, improved officer response capabilities, and earned him multiple awards. His contributions to EMS and law enforcement collaboration make him an outstanding candidate for this honor.

Gregory Smith - The Permanente Medical Group

Dr. Greg Smith has served as the Regional Medical Director of Ambulance Services for The Permanente Medical Group since 2022, acting as the liaison between EMSA and Kaiser Permanente Northern California (KPNC) across 21 medical centers. He collaborates closely with KPNC's partner LEMSAs and has contributed to multiple state and regional EMS committees, including the EMSA APOT Committee, State Trauma Advisory Committee, and EMDAC. Recently, he assumed the role of Medical Director of Emergency Management for KP Northern California, bringing over 15 years of leadership in emergency response, including managing outbreaks like Ebola, COVID, and measles.

Ron Caselli - Marin Fire

With over 30 years of service, Engineer Paramedic Ron Caselli has been a dedicated leader in EMS and firefighting at Marin County Fire Department. From his start as an EMT to becoming a paramedic, he has gained extensive experience in fire suppression, emergency medical care, and mentorship. Known for his exceptional patient care and leadership, Ron continues to inspire the next generation of EMTs and paramedics, recently guiding an intern to success as a preceptor. His unwavering commitment and lasting impact make him highly deserving of recognition.

JD Pomilia - Marin Fire

JD Pomilia has been instrumental in improving access to life-saving emergency services for the staff and incarcerated residents of San Quentin Rehabilitation Center (SQRC). He has demonstrated dedication in collaborating with local and regional agencies to enhance services for both SQRC and the surrounding community. Over the past year, JD has actively engaged with the SQRC team and community stakeholders to optimize the use of firefighter paramedic services, ensuring this critical resource is utilized effectively. He has also played a key role in coordinating firefighter paramedic responses to medical emergencies at SQRC, working to minimize the impact on the surrounding community while recognizing the extended response times at SQRC due to infrastructure and security protocols.

EMS Cross

Macolm Graham - American Medical Response - Hemet

Malcolm Graham is nominated for developing the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) and Peer Support Program for AMR EMS employees in Riverside County. The program, which serves over 1,000 employees, proactively monitors critical stress events like mass casualties, pediatric cardiac arrests, and suicides, offering timely support. Under Malcolm's leadership, the program has assisted 54 crews in its first six months, often reaching out to EMS teams before they request help. Beyond his role as CISM/Peer Support Coordinator, Malcolm has served as an EMT, Paramedic, Field Supervisor, Preceptor, and Operations Supervisor, demonstrating his dedication to both public service and EMS providers' mental health.

Marisa Nieto-Gomez - San Rafael Fire Department

Firefighter/Paramedic Marisa Nieto Gomez has demonstrated over two decades of excellence in EMS, with experience at AMR, Paramedics Plus, and multiple fire departments, including her current role at San Rafael Fire Department (SRFD). She has excelled in leadership, serving as the Paramedic Liaison and Assistant Paramedic Liaison, contributing to SRFD's paramedic program. FF/PM Nieto Gomez is known for her thorough assessments, exemplary bedside manner, and effective communication with crews. She has been a mentor for new paramedics and a trusted advisor at the academy.

Graham Winkelman - San Rafael Fire Department

Firefighter/Paramedic Graham Winkelman has served with the San Rafael Fire Department since 2005, demonstrating exceptional skill, leadership, and dedication to EMS. With over two decades of paramedic experience, including time with the Russian River Fire Department, he provides compassionate and expert patient care. Beyond his clinical excellence, he has mentored numerous firefighter/paramedics and paramedic interns, emphasizing patient assessment and critical thinking. His leadership is widely recognized, earning him nominations for Firefighter of the Year and selection as the department's Paramedic Liaison to the County EMS Division.

Justin Pels - Sonoma County Fire Department

Since joining the Sonoma County Fire District in 2021, Justin has played a pivotal role in the department's transition to a full ALS system, elevating service quality and positively impacting the EMS community. His leadership and mentorship have shaped the careers of new paramedics and junior college students. Justin's composure and expertise were highlighted during a cardiac arrest at a high-profile bike race, where his quick action led to a successful patient outcome. Recognized locally and statewide, Justin exemplifies the values of EMS: integrity, compassion, and dedication to service.

Michael Doucette - San Bernardino County

He is highly skilled and compassionate, always advocating for his patients. Michael dedicates significant time to training new hires and colleagues, creating and teaching classes, and supporting paramedic school candidates. He also serves as a chaplain and peer support member, providing emotional support to colleagues during difficult times. His clinical knowledge exceeds standard expectations, and his contributions to the department's equipment and training initiatives further highlight his commitment to excellence. Despite a demanding schedule, Michael balances his professional responsibilities with family life, making him an exemplary candidate for this honor.

Nicole Castillo -

Nicole Castillo exemplifies dedication, professionalism, and compassion in EMS. A highly skilled paramedic, she is a mentor and leader, guiding new recruits with expertise and ethical integrity. Despite personal hardships, including the loss of her father and brother and another brother's near-fatal accident, she has remained resilient, using her experiences to deepen her empathy for patients and colleagues. Nicole's leadership extends beyond clinical excellence—she is a trusted resource within her department, shaping the next generation of EMS professionals. Her numerous cardiac saves and unwavering commitment to patient care make her a role model in the EMS community.

Ralph Pietropaula - American Medical Response - Riverside

Riverside County AMR Paramedic Ralph Pietropaula has exemplified excellence in EMS for over 20 years. A dedicated paramedic and preceptor, he has trained countless students, many of whom have gone on to successful careers. Known for his professionalism, adaptability, and calm demeanor, he has fostered strong

relationships with allied agencies and hospital staff. A U.S. Marine veteran, Ralph carries his commitment to service into EMS, inspiring those around him to excel in high-pressure situations. His knowledge, skill, and leadership have made him a respected pillar of the EMS community.

Mark Stevenson - Los Angeles Fire Department

Mark Stevenson, a Firefighter/Paramedic with LAFD, blends extensive experience in search and rescue, emergency medicine, and the fire service. Since 2015, he has volunteered with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Malibu Search and Rescue Team. Serving at LAFD's Station 9, Mark is also part of FEMA's Task Force 1 and has been deployed on high-profile missions like the Borel Fire and Hurricane Milton. As a Tactical Paramedic, he supports LAPD SWAT and provides vital medical care in high-risk zones. Mark's rescue of a suspect from a burning building and his training of hundreds of officers showcase his extraordinary commitment to public safety.

Inter-Service EMS Recognition Medal

John Yoshida - Hawthorne Police Department

Officer Yoshida rushed to a call of a baby choking on a ball and not breathing. Realizing the gravity of situation, he diverted from the call he was on and arrived before EMS. He was able to partially clear the airway and allow the baby to breathe. While fire department medics were preparing to transport the child, he did not stop his efforts even though fire medics were there and he continued attempts to open the airway and succeeding in dislodging the ball.

Kurtis Brajevich, Diego Campos, Gustavo Campos, Herson Coronado - Hawthorne Police Department

On October 24, 2024, Officers Brajevich, Gustavo Campos, Diego Campos, and Coronado responded to a vehicle-pedestrian accident and found an unresponsive man with a severe leg injury. Despite appearing dead, the officers quickly confirmed the lack of a pulse and initiated CPR. Officer Coronado performed chest compressions while Officer Diego Campos provided rescue breaths using a Bag Valve Mask. Officer Gustavo Campos used an AED to check for lethal arrhythmia. Their coordinated efforts resulted in the victim regaining a pulse and beginning to breathe on his own. Fire department medics transported him to the hospital, where he survived. The officers' teamwork and swift medical interventions were crucial in saving the victim's life.

Roberta Valencia - Colton Police Department

Officer Roberta Valencia of the Colton Police Department is nominated for the Inter-service EMS Recognition Medal for her heroic actions following a house fire. On the morning after Thanksgiving, she witnessed a two-story home engulfed in flames and immediately called for help. Upon arrival, she encountered injured family members and children escaping from the second floor. Spotting a severely burned three-year-old boy, she acted decisively, transporting him to safety in her patrol car to expedite medical care. Her quick thinking, bravery, and dedication to serving her community exemplify the highest standards of law enforcement and EMS support.

Lifesaving Medal

Chris Gonzales, Frederick Pearce - Los Angeles County Sheriff

On August 4, 2024, Christopher Gonzales and Frederick Pearce played a crucial role in saving the life of Luis Lopez, a 50-year-old who collapsed during a 100-mile trail race in 102-degree heat. Upon receiving the emergency call, Gonzales and Pearce used their knowledge of the trail network to guide assisting units on an alternate path, ensuring faster access. They also quickly called for air support. After a half-mile hike, they arrived first on scene and began cooling Lopez until he could be airlifted. Their quick thinking, expertise, and medical care were vital in saving his life.

Misty Miller - Kern County Sheriff

On May 6th, 2024, Detentions Deputy Misty Miller, on her way to work, stopped at a serious traffic accident and provided life-saving aid. She applied a tourniquet to control severe bleeding from a driver's leg wound and assisted until emergency responders arrived. A Bakersfield Police Sergeant praised her quick thinking, which likely saved the victim's life. Deputy Miller also provided critical statements to investigators that led to the suspect's arrest. Her actions demonstrated exceptional professionalism and dedication.

Ernest Castillo- American Medical Response

Paramedic Ernest Castillo for his extraordinary bravery and unwavering commitment to saving lives (off duty) during an apartment explosion next to his apartment. Despite the chaos and danger, Ernest ran directly into the apartment alongside police officers, demonstrating exceptional courage and selflessness. His quick thinking and decisive action allowed him to safely

evacuate several patients, putting his own safety aside to ensure others had a chance to survive. This act of heroism embodies the very essence of the paramedic profession, and we are incredibly grateful for Ernest Castillo's unwavering dedication and fearless service.

Jeremy Jaime - Falck

On June 24, 2024, Jeremy Jaime, an off-duty medic, saved seven-year-old Bastian "Bazzy" Michel after he was struck by a truck. Upon finding Bazzy unconscious, Jeremy quickly administered CPR with the help of a dental assistant and successfully revived him after two minutes. He noted serious injuries, including a broken arm, head injury, and internal damage. Jeremy assisted emergency responders and supported Bazzy's family, who were grateful for his actions. Bazzy made an incredible recovery, and the two families have since grown close. Bazzy now affectionately calls Jeremy his "guardian angel" or "Maui."

Brooklyne Cooper - Redlands

On March 18, 2024, off-duty EMT Brooklynne Cooper was at 24 Hour Fitness in Riverside when she witnessed a gym member collapse. Recognizing the person was in cardiac arrest, she immediately began CPR and used an AED to defibrillate the patient twice. Riverside Fire Department took over the resuscitation, and the patient regained a pulse. The patient was transported to Riverside Community Hospital, stabilized, and later discharged neurologically intact. The patient returned to the gym in November 2024. Brooklynne, also an EMT with AMR San Bernardino County and a volunteer firefighter with Cal Fire Yucaipa, is currently attending paramedic school.

Medal of Valor

David Achen, Steven Cabral, Jimmy Holguin - San Benito County EMS Agency

On May 14, 2024, while en route to a wildland fire, Engine 644 encountered a severe vehicle accident with one car overturned and on fire, trapping an occupant inside. Without hesitation, Firefighter Cabral braved intense heat and smoke to rescue the victim, while Captain Holguin called for additional resources, including an air ambulance. Firefighters Cabral and Achen, along with their Captain, provided immediate medical care and extinguished the fire. Their quick thinking, exceptional teamwork, and decisive actions ensured the patient's survival and recovery. San Benito County EMS Agency commended their professionalism, composure under pressure, and dedication to life-saving care.

Matthew Picazo – Torrance Fire Department

On March 20, 2024, during a sunrise hike to the base of Mount Fitzroy in Argentina, a woman named Makenna slipped on ice near a waterfall and suffered a severe leg injury. After assessing her, the group realized she had a broken tibia and fibula and was at risk of hypothermia. Despite limited resources, the group moved her to a safer location and wrapped her leg with bandages. Due to the lack of emergency services, the group decided to carry her 6-7 miles back to the car. After a technical descent, they reached the car by 3:00 PM. They drove her to the local hospital, but after discovering the X-ray machine was down, they decided to drive two hours to another hospital. There, Makenna's fracture was confirmed, and she was later expedited for surgery in the U.S. Makenna's father, an ER doctor, expressed gratitude for their efforts.

Ismael Orozco – San Francisco Fire Department

EMT Ismael Orozco, a member of the San Francisco Fire Department's Street Crisis Response Team, responded to a call for an individual in crisis. During initial contact, the patient attempted to jump from a second-story window, but EMT Orozco caught them by the ankle as they began to fall. Despite the individual struggling, he held on for nearly 10 minutes until ground units secured a ladder, allowing for a safe rescue. His quick thinking and perseverance prevented serious injury or death, ensuring the patient received further care at the hospital.

Jeff Guevara – San Francisco Fire Department

AMR Medic 264 was first on scene to a smoke-filled house. After finding the front door locked, EMT Jeff Guevara continued searching around the house for signs of life. Spotting the victim inside the house filled with smoke and flames, Jeff disregarded his own personal safety to rescue the helpless man. Jeff entered the inferno and pulled the victim to safety. After the man was in a safe location, Jeff and his paramedic partner began treating the victim, and ultimately transported him to the regional burn center.

River Casner – GMR

River Casner's actions during a recent traffic collision exemplified extraordinary courage and dedication. Upon arriving at the scene, River and his partner, Omar de La Cruz, found a vehicle engulfed in flames with occupants trapped inside. While Omar worked to extinguish the fire, River focused on freeing the family from the burning car, despite enduring significant burns to his ears, hands, and arms. His quick and selfless actions were crucial in saving a three-year-old boy's life. River's ability to remain composed and make critical decisions under extreme pressure highlights his commitment and bravery.

Meritorious Service Medal

Alex Hernandez, Michael Wheeler - American Medical Response - Riverside

Michael Wheeler and Alex Hernandez for an EMS award. On October 1, 2024, they responded to a 2-year-old drowning. They quickly began 5 full ventilations to the patient and began transport immediately. Ultimately, they spent only 3 minutes on scene and then began life-saving measures during transport. ROSC was obtained upon arrival at the ED. This was an extremely stressful situation, but Michael and Alex were able to collectively bring calm to the scene and work cohesively with other providers on scene and at the ED.

Kenneth Glimme – Reach Air Medical

Flight Paramedic Kenny Glimme has served with REACH in Southern California since 2022. In July, while off duty due to maintenance on REACH 16, he heard a desperate scream and saw a woman holding her lifeless toddler, who had drowned. Without hesitation, Kenny rushed to perform CPR until Oceanside Fire arrived. Recognizing the urgency, he coordinated with responders to transport the child to a nearby air medical base, where he assisted in securing an airway before the child was flown to the hospital. Thanks to his swift actions, the child regained circulation and is now recovering. Kenny's quick thinking and dedication exemplify the highest standards of emergency care.

Alexander Marbach - American Medical Response - Ventura

EMT Alexander and his partner responded to a 9-1-1 call for James, who was experiencing severe breathing difficulty. During transport to Community Memorial Health, James's condition worsened, and he began to panic, fearing for his life. Remaining calm under pressure, Alexander provided continuous medical care and reassured James, telling him he would survive. His steady presence and words of encouragement gave James the strength to keep fighting. In a high-stress situation where every second mattered, Alexander's skill, composure, and dedication played a crucial role in saving James's life.

Catherine Borman – Santa Monica Fire Department

Catherine's dedication to EMS education and program development has significantly advanced the Santa Monica Fire Department's capabilities. Her expertise, passion for teaching, and leadership in implementing critical programs—such as the Community Response Unit, Alternate Destination Transport Pilot, and ECMO Pilot—showcase her commitment to improving both provider education and patient care. She is an exemplary candidate for recognition.

Luis Sarabia-Hernandez – Department of Emergency Management

In October 2024, Dispatcher Luis Sarabia-Hernandez expertly managed a 9-1-1 call from a 70-year-old heart patient stranded on a trail, guiding him through breathing difficulties while using advanced technology to pinpoint his exact location. His persistence and exceptional care ensured the patient received timely help, ultimately saving his life, and the patient later expressed profound gratitude for the life-saving support he received.

Micha Borrett – Torrance Fire Department

On April 21, 2024, Dispatcher Micah Borrett demonstrated exceptional problem-solving skills during a fentanyl overdose call, using Rapid SOS to pinpoint the patient's location in a large building and providing crucial information to on-scene personnel. Despite the challenges of an altered caller and limited details, his persistence and communication helped save two unconscious patients, who were later transported in stable condition.

Nicole Gonzalez – American Medical Response – Contra Costa

Nicole has been an EMT for over 20 years and has dedicated her life to EMS in cornua, service many communities directly in response to emergency calls for service. But she has gone above and beyond by becoming a therapy dog handler and peer support team professional, selflessly responding to the emergent needs of colleagues as well as the public. She serves her local EMS teammates and citizens on a daily basis providing CISM and other assistance with humility and excellence. But she also deploys both within California and nationally to critical incidents and disasters, frequently on a moment's notice and weeks in duration.

Naila Francies – Alameda County EMS Agency

Naila Francies has greatly impacted EMS through her leadership in Quality Improvement, community education, and DEI initiatives. She developed a CQI plan that improved response times for critical conditions and demonstrated exceptional leadership during the pandemic. Naila has mentored EMS staff, advanced data-driven decision-making, and worked to close care gaps for underserved communities. Her dedication to training, innovation, and equity has enhanced patient care and service delivery.

Nicholas Adragna, Casey Cheshier, Luis Mendoza – Alameda County EMS Agency

While assisting with a missing hiker search, Air5 tactical paramedics Casey Cheshier, Luis Mendoza, and Nicholas Adragna responded to a mass casualty collision on Angeles Forest Highway. They found multiple critically injured victims, including a deceased two-year-old girl who had been unrestrained. The team triaged the scene, treating an elderly woman with severe injuries and an eight-year-old boy with abdominal and back injuries. Cheshier coordinated preparations for rapid medical intervention and requested additional rescue helicopters for the critical patients. Their quick, decisive actions ensured effective care in a complex and chaotic situation.

Sara Broncho-Morning – San Bernardino County Fire Protection District

Sara Broncho-Morning, RN, MSN-Ed., MICN, ECNS, EMT, is nominated for EMS Educator of the Year for her 30+ years of dedication to EMS education. Starting as an EMT in 1987, she has trained countless EMS professionals, serving as an educator, Paramedic Liaison Nurse, and lead instructor for the MICN program at Crafton Hills College. Her passion, mentorship, and impact on EMS education, including shaping San Bernardino County's Ambulance Operator Program, make her a deserving candidate for this honor.

Derrall Nuttall – American Medical Response

Paramedic Derrall Nuttall is nominated for the Meritorious Service Medal Award for his 37 years of dedication to EMS. Since becoming an EMT in 1988, he has demonstrated clinical excellence, leadership, and mentorship, working with AMR-Victorville and previously serving in San Francisco. Derrall has responded to major events, including the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake and multiple hurricane deployments. A committed educator, he has mentored paramedic students and contributed to clinical studies. His persistence and expertise have directly impacted patient outcomes, making him highly deserving of this honor.

Wendy Chapman – North Coast Emergency Medical Services Agency

Wendy Chapman has been a dedicated advocate for pediatric prehospital education for over 20 years, driving advancements and improvements through the statewide EMS for Children Educational Forum. As the Education and Communication Chair of the EMS for Children Technical Advisory Committee, she has played a pivotal role in enhancing education and communication efforts within the pediatric emergency care community.

Omar DeLaCruz – North Coast Emergency Medical Services Agency

Omar de La Cruz demonstrated extraordinary bravery and professionalism during a critical traffic collision. Arriving within a minute, he quickly assessed the scene, called for backup, and worked to control a vehicle fire while his partner, River Casner, attempted a rescue. When River sustained burns, Omar shifted to assist him while continuing to fight the flames. Their teamwork saved a three-year-old boy's life. Omar's quick thinking, leadership, and selflessness exemplify the spirit of the Meritorious Service Medal.

Gail Porto – Piedmont Fire Department

With over three decades of dedication to EMS education and advocacy, Gail has played a pivotal role in training and supporting both providers and patients. Beginning in the late 1970s, she trained EMTs and paramedics across multiple fire departments and community colleges. She later spent two decades overseeing EMS education for Alameda, Albany, Piedmont, and Emeryville Fire Departments, continuing her work in Albany and Piedmont for over 22 years. Recognized at both county and state levels, she has received numerous awards, including the Ben Mathews Lifetime Achievement Award and recognition for establishing a community paramedic program. Gail remains a fierce advocate for first responders, collaborating with Chabot College and fire departments to address paramedic shortages. Her lifelong contributions make her a deserving candidate for this award.

Samuel Escobar – American Medical Response

In May 2024, Sam Escobar responded to a 911 call for a 60-year-old male experiencing chest pain. Recognizing a STEMI on the 12-lead ECG, he swiftly ruled out contraindications for nitrates, prioritized rapid transport, and delivered the patient to a STEMI center, where a 100% LCA blockage was identified and treated. The patient made a full recovery and later sent a letter of gratitude, crediting Sam with saving his life. This case is just one example of Sam's clinical excellence, leadership, and unwavering dedication to his community.

Dispatcher of the Year

Alix Anderson- Contra Costa County Fire Protection District

On October 10th, Dispatcher Alix calmly guided a caller through life-saving CPR for a choking 1-year-old, ensuring critical care until emergency units arrived, and the child made a full recovery. On November 10th, she took control of a chaotic choking incident with an 81-year-old, providing CPR instructions until the patient regained consciousness and was transported in stable condition, showcasing exceptional professionalism and quick thinking in both emergencies.

EMS Administrator of the Year

David Magnino, Sacramento County EMS

With over 40 years of public service, including nine years as Sacramento County EMS Administrator, David Magnino has been a transformative leader in EMS. His dedication to innovation, data-driven decision-making, and collaborative partnerships has significantly improved patient care and system efficiency, making him a deserving candidate.

EMS Educator of the Year

Dino Beltz, San Manuel Band of Mission Indians

Battalion Chief Dino Beltz's dedication to EMS education and first responder safety is truly commendable. His development of the Neurodivergent Operational Awareness (NOA(h)) training is a groundbreaking initiative that fills a critical gap in first responder education. By equipping fire, EMS, law enforcement, and security personnel with the skills to recognize and effectively interact with neurodivergent individuals, he is fostering safer and more compassionate emergency responses. His work is not only inspired by personal experience but is also making a tangible difference in communities across Southern California.

Medical Director of the Year

Greg Kann, Sacramento County EMS

His leadership in implementing the BLS tiered response model, optimizing ambulance offload times, and spearheading innovative programs like EMS Buprenorphine and Naloxone Leave-Behind has significantly improved patient outcomes. He has played a key role in securing EMSA approvals for the Advanced EMT pilot, pre-hospital whole blood use, and triage to alternate destinations. His research collaborations and leadership in APOT reduction efforts have set new standards in EMS efficiency.

EMT of the Year

MJ, Alameda Health Systems

MJ is a truly deserving candidate for recognition for her outstanding service and dedication to patient care. In a high-pressure, life-or-death situation, she demonstrated exceptional professionalism, composure, and expertise, ensuring the safe delivery of a newborn in the hospital parking lot. Her ability to lead, comfort, and coordinate a team of less-experienced personnel speaks volumes about her skill and leadership as a senior EMT at Highland Hospital. MJ's quick thinking and compassionate care turned a potentially chaotic scenario into a well-executed emergency response, resulting in a healthy mother and baby. Her actions not only impacted the lives of the family she assisted but also served as an invaluable learning experience for the junior staff present. MJ exemplifies the highest standards of EMS and is truly worthy of recognition.

Mobile Intensive Care Nurse of the Year

Christopher Britton – Kaiser Permanente

Chris Britton has played a key role in reducing Ambulance Patient Offload Time (APOT) at Kaiser Hospital, Roseville, decreasing it from 83 minutes to just 22 minutes. His leadership and creative solutions have also helped other local hospitals improve their APOT times. Chris spoke at the APOT Summit #2, showcasing his success, and continues to advocate for patient care as a flight nurse for Reach. His efforts have led to significant improvements in hospital efficiency and patient outcomes, making him a deserving candidate for recognition.

Paramedic of the Year

Barry Chris Lloyd – Sacramento Metro Fire District

Paramedic Lloyd has extensive experience in both the private and public sectors, having run thousands of calls across Southern and Northern California. One notable incident occurred on January 3, 2004, when he led the response to a traumatic injury involving a 29-year-old male and a tractor auger. His expert care, including applying a tourniquet, occlusive chest seal, and administering Tranexamic Acid, was instrumental in saving the patient's life despite severe injuries. The patient, now walking with crutches, had injuries like near amputation, multiple fractures, and a pneumothorax. Beyond his fieldwork, Lloyd has mentored others as an FTO and contributed as an adjunct faculty member.