

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION
PRESENTS



VALOR AWARDS 2020

★ ★ ★ WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, 2021 ★ ★ ★
DODGER STADIUM



LOS ANGELES
FIRE
DEPARTMENT
FOUNDATION

VALOR

is the Los Angeles Fire Department's annual awards ceremony honoring LAFD members for outstanding service above and beyond the call of duty.



PHOTO BY Gary Apodaca, LAFD

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION
PRESENTS

VALOR AWARDS 2020

PROGRAM

WELCOME

Robert Kovacik, NBC4
Master of Ceremonies

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

LAFD Color Guard

NATIONAL ANTHEM

Firefighter Dennis Rodriguez
Steve Donn

INVOCATION

Chaplain George Negrete

REMARKS

Mayor Eric Garcetti
Fire Chief Ralph M. Terrazas
Mike Ahmar, Chairman, LAFD Foundation

AWARDS PRESENTATION

Fire Chief Ralph M. Terrazas

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5, 2021 | DODGER STADIUM

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MAYOR

FIRE DEPARTMENT

RALPH M. TERRAZAS
FIRE CHIEF

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On a daily basis, the members of the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) demonstrate courage, commitment to duty, and self-sacrifice; qualities that have been the hallmark of the LAFD since its creation in 1886. On behalf of the entire LAFD, I express our gratitude to all of our Medal of Valor, Medal of Merit and the Special Commendation recipients who selflessly risked their lives for the protection of life and property for the citizens of Los Angeles.

I am also grateful to our Community Impact Award recipient, CORE: Community Organized Relief Effort, for their tremendous partnership during the ongoing pandemic, as well as Farmers Insurance, which is being recognized with the Community Impact Award.

The LAFD has traditionally been recognized as the nation's leader in the Fire Service. As such, the men and women of our Department continue to uphold this commitment by inherently responding to the steady stream of risks and dangers that challenge our profession. This year, for the first time, an individual Fire Station will also be honored for its members' courageous and faithful service to the community which it serves.

Today you will hear the individual accounts of all of our award recipients, and how their actions brought great credit to not only themselves, but to the LAFD and the fire service itself. The LAFD Medal of Valor and Medals of Merit awards ceremony is our humble way of recognizing these members for serving with Courage, Integrity, and Pride.

Congratulations to all of our honorees.

Ralph M. Terrazas
RALPH M. TERRAZAS
Fire Chief





ERIC GARCETTI
MAYOR

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, welcome to the 2020 LAFD Medal of Valor Awards, hosted by the Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation. We may find ourselves celebrating under very different circumstances than in years past, but we have no greater honor than recognizing the bravery of the extraordinary Angelenos who put their lives on the line every day to protect our city. Our firefighters are true heroes in every sense of the term. We owe them our eternal gratitude for their unwavering courage; we hold in our hearts all those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

I would like to extend a special congratulations to this year's award recipients: Fire Station 9, FF III Cody Crippen, FF/PM Wesley Manning, Engineer Robert Medrano, Captain I Rob Scott, and Captain II Kenneth Willahan, as well as our organizational partners: Community Organized Relief Effort (CORE) and Farmers Insurance.

These are extraordinary times, and the work of the LAFD and our partners has been critical in keeping Angelenos safe. You have stepped up in a remarkable way, and because of your service, Los Angeles is an even stronger city. I send my best wishes for a great event, and thank you for everything you do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Garcetti'.

ERIC GARCETTI
Mayor



ABOUT THE LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT FOUNDATION

The Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation (LAFD Foundation) was established in 2010 by corporate and civic leaders who recognized the need to alleviate the pressures of budgetary constraints.

As the Department's official non-profit partner, the Foundation supports the LAFD by providing firefighters with tools, training, and programmatic resources. Over the past two years alone, the LAFD Foundation has raised more than \$10,690,000 for gear and equipment that helps protect communities and save lives.

EQUIPPING EVERY FIREFIGHTER

City resources are finite. Demands on L.A. firefighters are seemingly endless.

The brave men and women of the Los Angeles Fire Department deserve every available advantage to help keep them safe and perform to the absolute best of their abilities.

The Foundation secures protective gear, crucial equipment, and much more for all 3,500 LAFD firefighters. From carcinogen-blocking hoods and heavy-duty flashlights to this year's requests for structure fire gloves and wildfire brush clearance tools, the Foundation fulfills critical needs.

PRIORITIZING HEALTH & SAFETY

Firefighters face an increased risk of developing cancer due to smoke and hazardous chemicals they are exposed to in the line of duty. In fact, recent studies have shown that firefighters are 14% more likely to die from cancer-related deaths than the general population. The Foundation and LAFD leadership are working to combat these statistics by providing equipment that will help minimize exposure to carcinogens, and technology to extract carcinogens from turnout jackets and pants post-incident.

ADOPT-A-FIRE STATION PROGRAM

The Adopt-A-Fire Station (AAFS) Program improves the working and living conditions for firefighters and paramedics in every fire station across Los Angeles. When working in 24-hour shifts, these stations also serve as a second home. Everyday essential appliances and exercise equipment sustain heavy wear-and-tear when used around the clock. When appliances break down, repair/replacements are not covered by the city's budget.

FIVE MOST REQUESTED FIRE STATION ITEMS:

- *Ice maker* • *Washer/Dryer* • *Power and Hand Tools*
- *Exercise Equipment* • *Mattresses*

FUNDING LAFD PROGRAMS

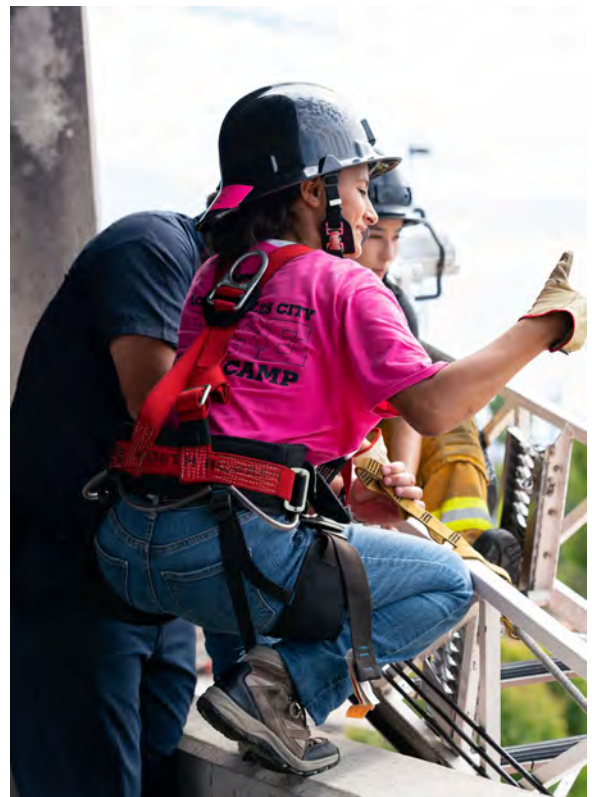
Youth Programs

The Foundation funds four exceptional LAFD Youth Programs — **Girls Camp**, **Youth F.I.R.E. Academy**, **Cadets**, and **Fire and EMS Magnet High Schools**. These programs offer students the opportunity to learn about a career in fire service through engaging task-driven activities where they develop skills in leadership, teamwork, and overall confidence.

Leadership Academy

The Foundation sponsors the **LAFD Leadership Academy**, an intensive graduate-level course designed to cultivate the next generation of LAFD command staff.

► For more information, or to help fund one of the above projects, please visit [**SupportLAFD.org**](https://SupportLAFD.org).



CURRENT FUNDING NEEDS

The men and women of the LAFD have immediate funding needs for gear, equipment, and programs that help keep them safe in the line of duty.

These needs range from resources for wildfire season and widespread emergencies, to equipment for everyday incidents and specialty units.

The LAFD Foundation works directly with LAFD leadership to identify critical funding gaps and provides ways for the public to help. Donations are channeled directly into tools and tangible resources that help protect property and save lives. Donor dollars are spent swiftly and responsibly, making an immediate impact where they are needed most.

Approximately 97% of the city's budget for the LAFD goes towards personnel costs, leaving just 3% to fund essential equipment, new technology and training programs.

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and cardiac monitoring devices are used to monitor, diagnose, and treat life-threatening cardiac arrhythmias and sudden cardiac arrests. Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics use this life-saving equipment constantly, either at the scene of an emergency or while transporting patients to hospitals and trauma centers. The equipment currently in use is more than a decade old and nearing the end of its service life. The cost to purchase 275 state-of-the-art, wireless-enabled AEDs is approximately \$630,000. Securing these AEDs is so important that a donor is matching all donations dollar-for-dollar, up to \$225,000.

Bailout Containment Systems are used as a last resort to provide a quick and safe method for firefighters to escape a structure that is on fire or deemed unsafe. This system consists of three main components: a harness attachment, a descending rope, and a hook. The LAFD needs to purchase new equipment and modify its existing system to ensure maximum safety for the firefighters. The total needed is \$438,000.

Wildland Tool Kits are essential to combating wildfires. These tool kits include chainsaws, lightweight shovels, and specialty hand tools. They allow our firefighters to cut, dig and scrape away brush down to the soil to create linear breaks or gaps in vegetation that help with fire containment. These tools are also used year-round for brush clearance and fire prevention.



► For more information, or to help fund one of the above projects, please visit [**SupportLAFD.org**](https://SupportLAFD.org).



Robert Kovacik

**MASTER OF CEREMONIES
NBC4 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**

ROBERT KOVACIK is an anchor and general assignment reporter for NBC4. He can be seen on the weekday evening newscasts at 5 p.m., 6 p.m., and 11 p.m. He is known for bringing viewers a local perspective and in-depth coverage to national and international events.

Kovacik has reported on many significant events, including the Las Vegas mass shooting and Manchester, England terrorist bombing attack, both in 2017, as well as the Orlando mass shooting when a gunman opened fire in a nightclub in 2016. He was on-scene for the near-collapse of the Oroville Dam in Northern California and the 19 fallen firefighters of Prescott, Arizona.

Kovacik was NBC4's correspondent for the 2013 Papal Conclave in Rome, and, the year prior, he covered the summer Olympics in London; he was later honored by the British Consul-General of Los Angeles for his reporting of the Games. Kovacik earned Emmy Awards for both international assignments.

Politically, Kovacik has covered Presidential debates and primaries, including reporting in Washington, D.C. for the funeral of George H. W. Bush, in Cleveland for the Republican Convention, and New York City, where candidates Clinton and Trump awaited election returns in 2016.

Early in his career, Kovacik became the youngest anchor in the nation's largest television market, New York City, when he was named anchor of KCET's overnight venture, "Nightworld." Over the course of his career, Kovacik has been recognized with several industry accolades, including multiple Emmy, Golden Mike, Associated Press, and Murrow Awards.

He is passionate about causes that impact Southern Californians and regularly participates in community events throughout the region.

Kovacik is an honors graduate of Brown University and Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, where he also graduated with honors.





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THE VALOR AWARDS

MEDAL OF VALOR

The **Medal of Valor** is awarded to sworn personnel who have demonstrated bravery at great risk to their own lives, beyond a doubt and clearly above the call of duty, whether on or off-duty.

MEDAL OF MERIT

The **Medal of Merit** is awarded to sworn personnel who distinguish themselves by performing an act where the individual's actions, if not taken, would have resulted in serious injury or present imminent danger to life. The individual must have demonstrated a conspicuous act of bravery with calculated personal risk to his or her own life.

LETTER OF SPECIAL COMMENDATION

A **Letter of Special Commendation** is awarded to Department members who perform an act requiring initiative and/or ability worthy of recognition during emergency or non-emergency conditions.

CORPORATE IMPACT AWARD

The **Corporate Impact Award** is presented to a company that exhibits philanthropic excellence in the community, outstanding corporate citizenship, and longstanding support of the Department and its personnel.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

The **Community Impact Award** is presented to an organization that provides invaluable service to the community and outstanding support for the people of Los Angeles.

STATION OF THE YEAR AWARD

The **Station of the Year Award** is presented to the men and women assigned to one specific station, who collectively exhibit exemplary service, professionalism, bravery, and compassion.





STATION OF THE YEAR

Fire Station 9

FIRE STATION 9 is located in downtown Los Angeles, serving the community referred to as Skid Row. Despite covering a relatively small geographical service area, Station 9 has historically ranked as one of the busiest, if not the busiest fire station in the nation.

Station 9 serves an area plagued by some of the most dangerous, sensitive, and complex challenges facing our communities. The approximately 60 firefighters at Station 9 regularly respond to everything from seizures and overdoses, to stalled elevators and commercial fires — all in an area defined by extreme poverty and homelessness.

Station 9 averages about 80 emergency calls per day. Many of the 7,000 homeless people living on Skid Row rely on these firefighters as their primary health care provider. The Station 9 crew does their best to help these patients who are often victims of crime, or crippled by addiction and psychiatric disorders from years of living on the street.

In 2019 alone, Station 9 logged nearly 22,800 emergency calls across just 1.28 square miles — about 7,500 more than the LAFD's next-busiest station. Serving one of our most vulnerable communities has given those at Station 9 a unique perspective on life in Los Angeles. But rather than dwell on non-stop challenges, they serve with pride, professionalism, and a sense of family shaped by their shared commitment to one of the city's most intense assignments.



COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD



CORE: Community Organized Relief Effort is the Los Angeles Fire Department's partner with the ongoing fight against COVID-19.

In late March of 2020, Los Angeles became the first major city in the U.S. to offer free COVID testing. Responsibility for managing public COVID testing fell on the LAFD. As the strain of this unprecedented effort unfolded, CORE recognized an opportunity to assist.

Six days a week, since the onset of the pandemic, CORE's staff and volunteers have subjected themselves to the rigors of operating public testing sites across Los Angeles. Together with the LAFD, CORE led the frontline effort to administer thousands of daily COVID tests. In fact, CORE has administered more than 4,200,000 COVID tests in Los Angeles in partnership with LAFD.

Founded in 2010 by actor and humanitarian Sean Penn, CORE arose to help provide vital relief and recovery services in the wake of the devastating earthquake in Haiti. Not long after, their disaster relief programs expanded to Puerto Rico, other parts of the Caribbean, and the Gulf Coast of the United States.

CORE continues the scope of its testing programs in communities across the country. Modeled on the success of their unconventional LAFD partnership, CORE now operates COVID sites in six states, Washington, D.C., and the Navajo Nation.





LETTER OF SPECIAL COMMENDATION

Firefighter III Cody Crippen

ON A SWELTERING August evening, Firefighter III Cody Crippen was set to enjoy some family time at the local pool. Not long after settling in, Cody heard screaming, ensued by a whirlwind of commotion. He looked up and saw a woman carrying a lifeless little boy.

Cody rushed to help as a crowd gathered. He encountered a father performing CPR on the unconscious child. Cody identified himself as a firefighter and knelt down to help.

He quickly cleared the boy's airway, delivered a series of back blows alternated by chest compressions. During the third set of compressions, the boy began to regain consciousness.

Within minutes of reviving the boy, local firefighters arrived on the scene. Cody conducted the handoff with the ambulance crew, then proceeded to comfort the child's parents while paramedics rendered care.

Thankfully the little boy has recovered fully due to the father's CPR training and Firefighter Crippen's heroic actions.



CORPORATE IMPACT AWARD



WHEN FARMERS INSURANCE began its operations in 1928, its founders instilled values of service and charity throughout the organization. Nearly 100 years later, Farmers actively supports the communities where its customers, agents, and employees live, work, and play.

Farmers puts its values into action through its philanthropic support of the Los Angeles Fire Department and the LAFD Foundation. In total, Farmers has contributed more than \$786,000 towards technology, tools, and equipment to help keep the men and women of the LAFD safe.

The Woodland Hills-based insurance leader has also graciously sponsored LAFD community events, helped raise awareness for the Foundation's immediate funding needs, and donated over \$185,000 specifically to the LAFD's cancer prevention efforts.

The Los Angeles Fire Department is honored to count Farmers Insurance among its most valued community partners.





MEDAL OF MERIT

Firefighter/Paramedic Wesley Manning

A SIMPLE SHOPPING errand resulted in a heart-breaking incident that prompted Firefighter/Paramedic Wesley Manning to act heroically.

Wes Manning was off-duty, shopping for towels at his local Costco. While browsing towards the rear of the store, he heard gunshots ring out. Turmoil ensued as terrified shoppers scrambled towards emergency exits.

Wes encouraged his fellow shoppers to remain calm and quiet as he helped usher them out of a nearby exit. Instead of fleeing for safety, Wes chose to stay inside the store in case someone needed help.

Manning cautiously made his way from the emergency exit through the aisles until he came upon a male lying on the ground. The man was leaning on his side while pointing the barrel of the firearm down a separate aisle.

Wes crouched behind a waist-high refrigerator unit for cover, then calmly engaged the man with the gun. Wes asked the man a series of simple questions and learned that no other shooters were present. At great personal risk, Wes proceeded to search the scene and encountered multiple victims — one deceased and two requiring immediate medical attention.

With help from a few brave Costco employees, Wes tended to the gunshot wounds of the victims. Wes remained with the victims until law enforcement and medical help arrived.

After the two conscious victims were in the hands of paramedics, Wes returned to examine the gunman for injuries while police secured the scene. After a nerve-racking 25-minute ordeal, Wes helped turn the shooter over to law enforcement without further incident.

Thanks to Firefighter/Paramedic Manning and a few courageous Costco employees, the two wounded victims survived.





MEDAL OF MERIT

Engineer Robert Medrano

ON A LATE August evening, Task Force 15 was dispatched to a sizable residential fire near Exposition Park. As is customary, Engineer Robert Medrano went to work securing the water supply for Engine 46 as soon as he arrived on the scene. With his primary task completed, he quickly moved on to survey the exterior of the structure.

He made his way to the backyard and encountered a frantic group of residents. They were unharmed but claimed two members of the household were still trapped inside.

At this point, heavy fire was showing from all sides of the building. With no time to waste, Engineer Medrano entered through the back door in search of the entrapped victims. He crouched low and moved with haste as thick, noxious smoke billowed throughout the house.

He searched until he located a blocked door, but it was too late. His eyes were searing. His lungs burned from the smoke and from holding his breath. He had to retreat to the backyard and regain his breath.

Twice more, he reentered the burning home in search of the trapped victims. On his third attempt, the door was breached with help from Engine 66 crew members, and the two victims were extracted. Engineer Medrano proceeded to render aid to a barely breathing female victim until she was loaded into an ambulance.

Medrano performed these acts despite not having his self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) - a firefighter's face protection and breathing system. He suffered significant smoke inhalation and was transported to a nearby hospital. While receiving oxygen treatment, Medrano learned the unfortunate news that the patient he helped rescue had passed away.

Engineer Medrano risked his personal safety in hopes of saving others. Despite the somber outcome, he is commended for his bravery and selflessness.





MEDAL OF MERIT

Captain I Rob Scott

CAPTAIN ROB SCOTT AND CAPTAIN KENNETH WILLAHAN are leaders and close colleagues at Fire Station 95, located near Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Off-duty, they are best friends who spend family vacations together.

Captains Scott and Willahan are being recognized for their courageous acts during a recent family vacation trip to Utah. On a picturesque rafting excursion in Moab, Utah, the captains found themselves involved in a dangerous river rescue.

Their group had paused for lunch along a sandy embankment of the Colorado River, in between sets of Class II and Class III rapids. As the children played and explored along the shore, the group's rafting guide spotted signs of trouble upriver.

In the distance, their guide spotted an upside-down kayak racing towards their position. Soon after, two individuals appeared in the water behind the kayak. The pair showed signs of distress.

The rafting guide retrieved a rescue throw bag — a whitewater safety device with a floating rope. Then, the two captains and their guide ran upriver towards the overboard kayakers. The would-be rescuers spaced themselves along the shore, hoping to deploy the throw bag in time to catch the first victim.

The distance was too great. The first kayaker was swept past them out of reach of the rescue rope. As the river carried the kayaker away, Captain Scott heard him yell out that his wife and son were in the water behind him. "My four-year-old is in the water! He can't swim!" screamed the man.

Captain Scott shouted downriver to alert the others as a woman and small boy came barreling down the rapids. Captain Scott waded into waist-deep water, hoping he could reach them. Unfortunately, he could not. The woman and little boy rushed by, visibly struggling to stay above water.

A short distance downriver, Captain Willahan attempted to reach her. The woman extended an outstretched oar, but it was no luck. Another miss. So, without a life vest, Captain Willahan plunged into the river, swimming frantically behind the mother and child.



MEDAL OF VALOR

Captain II Kenneth Willahan

Captain Willahan swam to them, grabbed onto the oar, and assured them that everything would be okay. He tried to swim back to shore with one arm, but the current was too strong. The three would have to endure another section of rapids on their own.

Captain Willahan held on tightly to the mother and child as they traversed the rapids. Even though the two were wearing life vests, the frigid river was exacting its toll. The mother and child were exhausted and losing strength with every passing moment. Without a vest, Captain Willahan managed to keep them all afloat with only one free arm.

Meanwhile, Captain Scott sprinted down the riverbank back to their raft. He and the guide ushered the group back into the raft to pursue Captain Willahan. They paddled furiously to catch up, scanning the banks as they rowed.

Shortly after they cleared the rapids, a second kayak had caught up with Captain Willahan — It was the grandparents of the little boy. They had witnessed the whole ordeal while racing to catch up.

Captain Willahan heaved the child into the grandparents' kayak. With the boy safe, Captain Willahan could focus on saving the mother. He held tightly to the side of the kayak with one arm and helped keep the woman afloat with the other.

The grandparents paddled a short distance to a safe embankment. Moments later, Captain Scott and the rest of the party arrived at the rescue scene to find the mother, boy, and Captain Willahan safely ashore.

The father of the little boy, the first of the kayakers to rush past the Captains while still on the riverbank, was rescued moments later by a group of paddleboarders.

Captain Rob Scott and Captain Kenneth Willahan successfully helped rescue a mother and her young boy at grave personal risk. Unknowingly, they also saved a third life, as it was later revealed that the mother was six months pregnant at the time of the incident. They exemplified exceptional bravery, courageous spirit, and the very best of the Los Angeles Fire Department.



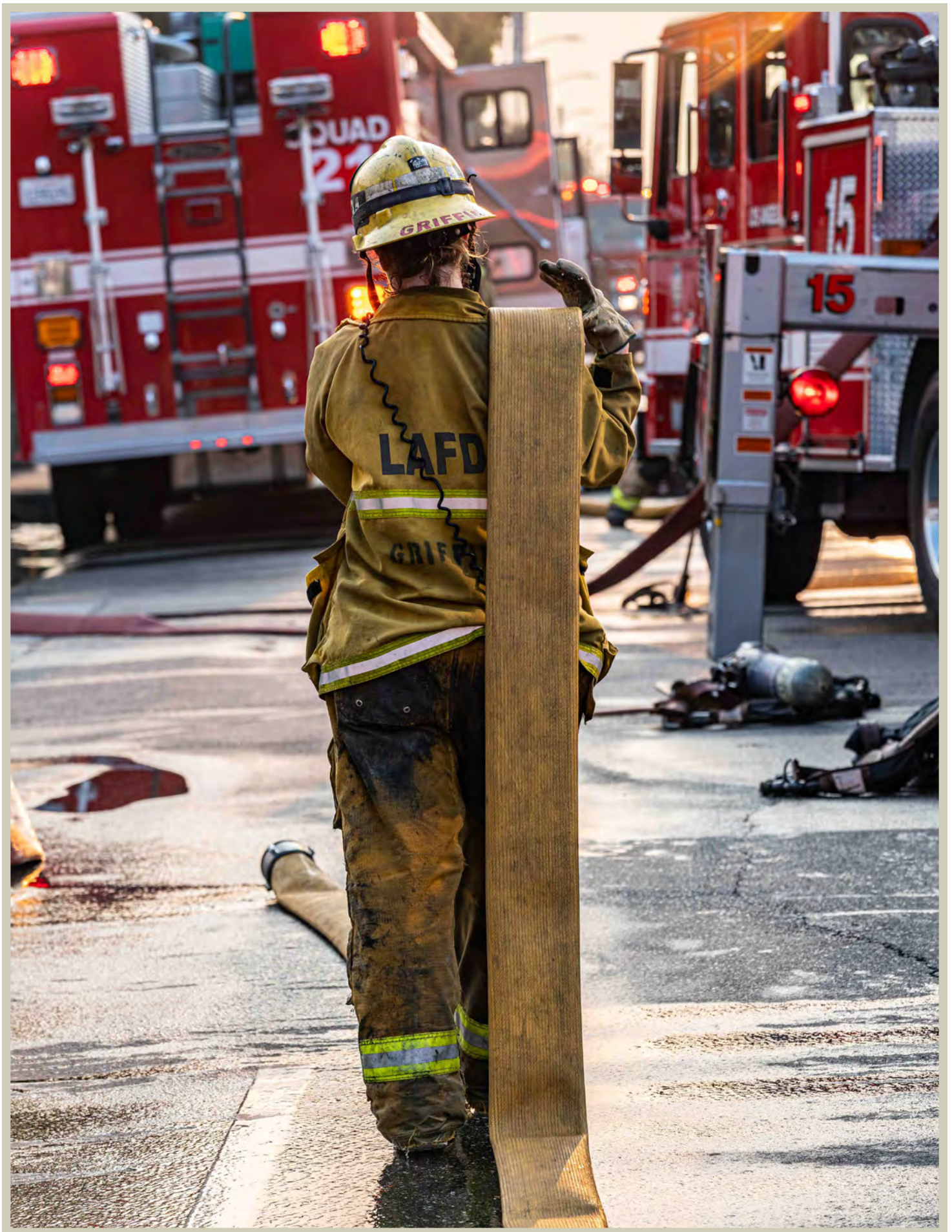


PHOTO BY Gary Apodaca, LAFD

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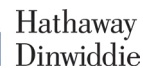
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SILVER



BRONZE



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SPECIAL THANKS

Tony Abatemarco
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The exceptional staff and crew at Dodger Stadium
Firefighter David Ortiz
Inspector Jacob Raabe
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PHOTO BY Gary Apodaca, LAFD



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