
AFRAS NEWS



SPRING 2016

ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA, INC.

PO BOX 565 • FISH CREEK, WI 54212-0565 • (920) 854-5253 TEL & FAX
WWW.AFRAS.ORG

The Association for Rescue at Sea, Inc., helps protect mariners from the perils of the sea by providing monetary and in-kind donations to world volunteer maritime search and rescue organizations. AFRAS is a 501(c)3 non-profit charity.

CRISIS ON THE MEDITERRANEAN & AEGEAN

Charles "Skip" Bowen, AFRAS President

I once heard Admiral Thad Allen, former Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, say, "Safety of Life at sea is paramount. It transcends all other considerations." Problems caused by the Syrian refugee crisis are not limited to land borders. There is a crisis on the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas today. At the end of December 2015, the U.N. Refugee Agency reported more than 1 million sea arrivals to Europe. Of these, 3,735 were missing, and believed drowned.

Admiral Allen was speaking in terms of Cuban migrants and enforcement of the "Wet foot, Dry foot" policy, but I believe that his words equally apply to all "at sea" distress situations. I spent much of my 32-year Coast Guard career in South Florida, the Bahamas and the Caribbean. I have personally dealt with literally tens of thousands of waterborne refugees. This, for me, was the most heart wrenching of all Coast Guard missions.

The sea is unforgiving to the unprepared, and refugees driven by desperation are ill prepared for the cold, dark and treacherous conditions found on the sea.

I don't care what your political, religious or other viewpoint is on refugees – this many men, women and children lost at sea on the Aegean and



Mediterranean is unacceptable. The region's maritime rescue resources are not sufficient. Organizations such as the Swedish Sea Rescue Society's Yellow Boat Project are trying to help.

In order to continue operations, the Yellow Boat Project is in desperate need of your help. The Association for Rescue at Sea (AFRAS) has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Swedish Sea Rescue Society to help with this project. You can make a U.S. tax-deductible donation through AFRAS to support the Yellow Boat Project.

As I stated, I am agnostic to the politics of this situation. More than most people, I understand the issues inherent with unbridled immigration. The ultimate disposition of the Syrian refugees is a larger problem than any one nation, but I know what we can't do: we can't leave them on the sea.



Refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea, heading from the Turkish coast to the northeastern Greek island of Lesbos, Jan. 29, 2016.

2016 AFRAS SEA RESCUE CAMPAIGNS

Charities & volunteers, like those from the Yellow Boat Project, are doing most of the work saving tens of thousands of refugee lives. AFRAS officers and directors have been actively seeking targeted donations for these heroes, to ensure funds get to where they are needed most. We are raising funds for these organizations that are saving lives in the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas:

-  Swedish Sea Rescue Society's Yellow Boat Project.
-  Sea Watch (Germany)
-  Hellenic Rescue Team (Greece)
-  Migrant Offshore Aid Station (Malta)
-  Norwegian Society for Sea Rescue
-  International Maritime Rescue Federation, which is developing regional capabilities

These donations are usually tax-deductible for U.S. taxpayers. A donor has made matching funds for these efforts, up to \$50,000, available.



Syrian and Iraqi refugees arrive from Turkey to Skala Sykamias, Lesbos Island, Greece. Volunteers from the Spanish rescue team Proactiva Open Arms (pictured in yellow/red clothing) assist the refugees.

TANZANIA SEA RESCUE

Tanzania has a brand new Maritime Rescue Coordination Center - but no rescue service! It can take five hours for government and commercial boats to be notified and be underway in an emergency. This part of the world is all too familiar with maritime disasters both large and small.

A dedicated group of volunteers is creating

Tanzania Sea Rescue (TSR), the nation's first 7 x 24 rescue boat service. TSR will be based in Dar es Salaam and is in need of lifejackets, communications equipment, funding for a boat – everything you might imagine for a group just starting out.

For a list of equipment needed now, contact info@afras.org. To target a donation by credit card at our website, select “Donate to AFRAS” and just say “For TSR” in the notes box before checkout.





C-PORT HEROISM AWARD

Chairman Dana Goward presented the C-Port Heroism Award to Capt. Anne Allard, of Sea Tow St. Thomas, USVI, at the National Association for Marine Assistance Industry annual dinner, Jan. 12. Capt. Allard was part of a daring rescue of six people, aboard a sailboat on the rocks at St. John during heavy weather and in a position that made a land-based rescue impossible. Allard swam from her rescue boat to the sailboat, assessed all the passengers and prepared them for a helicopter rescue. That rescue couldn't happen from the boat, because of the heavy seas pounding it. Allard braved the conditions once again and, timing the waves, helped each victim into the water, where the helicopter crew could safely hoist them. After helping save all six people, Allard freed the sailboat's dinghy and navigated it back through the surf break to her Sea Tow boat.

GOLD MEDAL AWARD CEREMONY & RECEPTION

Our annual Gold Medal Award reception and ceremony is Sept. 21, on Capitol Hill. Once again, Congressman Duncan Hunter, Chair, Coast Guard and Marine Transportation Subcommittee, will host the event.

The U.S. Coast Guard Commandant and senior staff have confirmed attendance. We'll once again expect numerous members of Congress and senior committee and personal staff at this event to honor heroes of maritime search and rescue.

NEW ENGINES FOR ST. JOHN SEARCH AND RESCUE

St. John Search and Rescue is back in business thanks, in part, to AFRAS' help purchasing two new Yamaha outboard engines for their boat.

AFRAS keeps in touch with volunteer maritime search and rescue organizations throughout the world through the International Maritime Rescue Federation. Organizations in the Caribbean and their needs are one of our focus areas. In addition to helping address needs as they arise, AFRAS solicits grant requests each year to better understand where support is most needed.

In 2015, AFRAS was able to coordinate a donation of radios from Raymarine to two organizations; Antigua and Barbuda Search and Rescue, and St. John Search and Rescue. We also pledged \$3,000 toward new engines for St. John's rescue boat. We are glad that the engines have been purchased and the boat is back in operation!



In our last newsletter, we told you about Sergio Cipolla, Dominican Republic Naval Auxiliary, winning the Caribbean Search and Rescue Award. Here's one more shot of Cipolla, U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Robert Warren and members of the organization, at the December ceremony in Santo Domingo.

Photo credits

Cover page: By Mstyslav Chernov/Unframe (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons – the image has been cropped from the original. Page two: Lead photo By Mstyslav Chernov/Unframe (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons – the image has been cropped from the original; Inset photo By Ggia (Own work) [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons. This page: courtesy Auxiliares Navales Dominicanos

NOMINEES SOUGHT FOR GOLD & SILVER MEDALS

The U.S. Coast Guard released "ALCOAST 081-16, Association for Rescue at Sea Gold and Silver Awards," March 2. This is the official solicitation for nominees for our annual awards. Here are the relevant portions of the message:

1. THIS ALCOAST SOLICITS FOR NOMINEES FOR THE ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA (AFRAS) 2015 AWARDS.

2. BACKGROUND.

A. FORMED IN 1976, AFRAS IS A NON-PROFIT FOUNDATION WHICH SUPPORTS SERVICES CONCERNED WITH SAVING LIVES AT SEA. THE AFRAS AWARDS PROGRAM PROVIDES THE OPPORTUNITY FOR AREA AND DISTRICT COMMANDERS, COMMANDING OFFICERS AND OFFICERS-IN-CHARGE TO RECOGNIZE DESERVING COAST GUARD PERSONNEL FOR BRAVERY IN THE CONDUCT OF SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSIONS.

B. THE AFRAS GOLD AND SILVER MEDALS ARE THE HIGHEST SEARCH AND RESCUE AWARDS PRESENTED TO A COAST GUARD MEMBER BY A CIVILIAN ORGANIZATION.

(1) GOLD MEDAL. ESTABLISHED IN 1982, THE GOLD MEDAL IS PRESENTED ANNUALLY TO A COAST GUARD ENLISTED PERSON FOR AN ACT OF EXTRAORDINARY BRAVERY DURING A RESCUE AT SEA.

(2) SILVER MEDAL. ESTABLISHED IN 2000, THE SILVER MEDAL (SILVER REFLECTS THE DISTINCTIVE AUXILIARY UNIFORM) IS PRESENTED ANNUALLY TO A DESERVING COAST GUARD AUXILIARIST (A COLLECTIVE NOMINATION MAY BE SUBMITTED FOR MEMBERS OF THE SAME BOAT OR AIR CREW). THE NOMINEE MUST HAVE PERFORMED A RESCUE INVOLVING LIVES SAVED IN EITHER INLAND OR COASTAL WATERS WHERE THE HEROIC ACTION OF THE NOMINEE WAS UNIQUELY DISTINGUISHED. HOWEVER, CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN TO ALL RESCUES INVOLVING LIFE-THREATENING SITUATIONS.

3. AWARDS PRESENTATION. BOTH THE GOLD AND SILVER MEDALS WILL BE PRESENTED ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT A CEREMONY IN WASHINGTON, DC. CEREMONY PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES, AFRAS LEADERSHIP, THE COMMANDANT OF THE COAST GUARD AND VARIOUS SENIOR COAST GUARD LEADERS. AWARD RECIPIENTS WILL BE HONORED AT THE CEREMONY AND FAMILY MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.

4. AFRAS AWARD ELIGIBILITY. AFRAS SELECTS RECIPIENTS FROM AMONG NOMINATIONS SUBMITTED. AWARD CRITERIA ARE SET FORTH IN REF (A) AND REITERATED BELOW:

A. GOLD MEDAL NOMINEES MUST BE ENLISTED MEMBERS ON ACTIVE DUTY AT THE TIME OF THE RESCUE BEING RECOGNIZED. SILVER MEDAL NOMINEES MUST BE COAST GUARD AUXILIARISTS AT THE TIME OF THE RESCUE BEING RECOGNIZED.

B. THE RESPONSE MUST INVOLVE A LIFESAVING RESCUE THAT INVOLVES PERILS FROM THE SEA WHERE THE HEROIC ACTIONS OF THE NOMINEE ARE UNIQUELY DISTINGUISHED. HOWEVER, CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN TO ALL RESCUES INVOLVING LIFE THREATENING SITUATIONS.

C. NOMINATIONS MUST INVOLVE CALENDAR YEAR 2015 RESCUES.

You can read the message in its entirety at: www.uscg.mil/announcements/alcoast.asp

SEEKING UNSUNG HEROES

Gary M. Thomas, Vice President for History and Heritage

Last year, our Board of Directors voted to include recognition of "unsung" heroes during our annual awards ceremony. The goal was to provide visibility for rescues at sea that may not have received the recognition they should have at the time they occurred.

During our inaugural presentation last September, we spotlighted former U.S. Coast Guard Boatswain's Mate First Class Bernie Webber, and the rest of the crew of the Motor Rescue Boat 36500. The crew of the 36500 was little known outside of the Coast Guard until the best selling book and eventual movie "The Finest Hours" became popular this year.

We are now soliciting nominations for this year's annual award ceremony. By nature of being "unsung," it is likely that you know of individuals or a group of rescuers who are deserving of recognition by a larger audience. If you would like to nominate someone, please send the name(s) of the individual or group, a brief summary of the rescue and why they are deserving of this recognition.

Email your nomination to heritage@afras.org. Thank you and we look forward to sharing stories of rescue at sea you know about that we may not.



Join AFRAS

AFRAS provides you with a means of supporting world volunteer maritime search and rescue services with a U.S. tax-deductible donation.

AFRAS offers two basic membership packages:

The first, a joint membership with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) for dues of \$100 per year. We will send you periodic AFRAS newsletters, press releases, and an invitation to our annual Gold Medal/Silver Medal/Amver award ceremony in Washington, D.C.

The second, a sole AFRAS membership for \$20 per year will entitle you to all AFRAS mailings including newsletters, press releases and miscellaneous information from our counterparts throughout the world.

All dues and donations given through AFRAS are tax deductible in the United States.

If you are interested in joining AFRAS, please fill out the information below and send along with your dues/donation to (or, make a donation at www.afras.org/donation.html)
Association for Rescue at Sea, Inc., P. O. Box 565, Fish Creek, WI 54212-0565.

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ (day) _____ (evening) E-mail _____

Membership (check one) AFRAS/RNLI (\$100 dues) AFRAS (\$20 dues)

Dues enclosed _____ (amount) Donation enclosed _____ (amount)

I would like to find out more about AFRAS. Please send me more information.

AFRAS Board of Directors

Chairman

MR. DANA GOWARD, SES (Ret.)

President

MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE COAST GUARD
CHARLES "SKIP" BOWEN, USCG (Ret.)

Vice President & Chief Information Officer
WAYNE SPIVAK

Vice President for History and Heritage
CDR GARY M. THOMAS, USCG (Ret.)

Secretary

ANNE KIFER

Treasurer

ANNE SKELTON

Public Information Officer

CWO4 BRANDON BREWER, USCG (Ret.)

* All Officers also serve as Directors

Directors

VADM JODY BRECKENRIDGE, USCG (Ret.)

CAPT JOHN CHOMEAU, USN (Ret.)

JOHN COOPER

CAPT JOSEPH FROHNHOEFER III

CAPT JOHN FUECHSEL, USCG (Ret.)

SIR STUART MATTHEWS

EDWARD F. O'BRIEN

RADM JAMES C. OLSON, USCG (Ret.)

VADM DAVID PEKOSKE, USCG (Ret.)

CDR KENNETH S. PRIME, USCG (Ret.)

CDR JAMES T. QUINN, USCG (Ret.)

COMO MARK SIMONI, National Commodore, USCG Auxiliary

LCDR PAUL STEWARD, USCG (Ret.)

RADM JAMES VAN SICE, USCG (Ret.)

International Advisors

JOS STIERHOUT, KNRM, The Netherlands

PAUL BOISSIER, RNLI, United Kingdom

JAMES VAUGHAN, RNLI, United Kingdom

TIM de WET, Safe Waters Foundation Africa

