

# Industry Heroics



**2015**

## **American Towman Medal Recipients**

American Towman Publisher Dennie Ortiz bestows a Towman Medal on a hero towman Jeremy Dykstra during Festival Night of the 2015 American Towman Exposition in Baltimore, Md.

**Robert Aikey**, Aikey's Body Shop; Jersey Shore, Pa.

Incident: On August 10, 2015, in Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania, a Ford Explorer slid off the road sideways into a tree just above a riverbank. Two people were heavily entrapped in the vehicle that was on its side with the roof wrapped around the tree. The fire department had cut much of the vehicle away, but still couldn't free them. Robert Aikey arrived on scene and worked to stabilize the Explorer by quickly, carefully climbing onto the SUV and straddling it to attach a snatch block in the tree above it. He then rigged lines to lift the car safely and move it away from the tree to remove the passenger without further harm. Firefighters said Robert was essential in getting the passenger out of the vehicle without further harm (the driver had died on impact).



For the simple act of bravery ... Robert Aikey.

*American Towman Medal*

**Jeremy Dykstra**, Eagle Towing; Montague, Mich.

Incident: During a January 7, 2015, blizzard on U.S. 31 in Dalton Township, Michigan, Jeremy was working to winch a vehicle out of the median from an earlier accident as

destruction struck all around. Inattentive drivers and the white-out conditions caused a 40-car pileup around the scene. A semi jack-knifed across both lanes completely blocking the highway and a vehicle became wedged under the semi, trapping three passengers. Jeremy's own truck was knocked by another semi in the massive pileup, but without hesitation he disengaged from his scene, hooked up to the trapped vehicle, pulled it free from under the semi and started basic aid to the driver.



For the simple act of bravery ... Jeremy Dykstra.

*American Towman Medal*

**Fred Scroggs Jr.**, Westland Car Care Towing; Westland, Mich.

Incident: On October 15, 2015, Fred Scroggs Jr. was killed when the distracted driver of an SUV slammed into him while he was helping a stranded driver with a flat tire on an I-96 interchange in Novi, Michigan. Fred is being called a hero for telling the woman he had been helping to stay safely inside her car, while he was fixing her tire. "Fred felt it was unsafe for her to be standing so close to the busy freeway and advised her to safely wait in her vehicle while

he serviced her car and in doing so, was able to save her life. He aided in saving a life right before his was so abruptly taken; he was truly a hero," said friend Justin Gabbard. Debbie Blake only received minor injuries. "He saved my life," she said. "I just thank God that [Freddie] saved me."



For the simple act of bravery ... Fred Scroggs Jr. (posthumously).

(Pictured: Fred Scroggs, Sr., accepting the award on behalf of his late son.)

**American Towman Medal**

**Randy Barton**, Randy's Repair; Gower, Mo.

Incident: On December 2, 2008, in Grayson, Missouri, a car ran off the road on a cold night and rolled twice down an embankment to land upside-down with a victim trapped inside, pinned by the crushed roof. Firefighters on scene needed better access. Randy Barton arrived and quickly secured the car with a line from his flatbed wrecker and used air cushions to lift the vehicle enough for firefighters to use the Jaws of Life and spreaders to extricate the driver, who eventually made a full recovery.

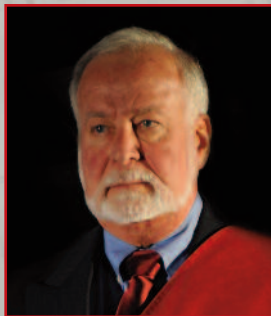


For courageous professionalism ... Randy Barton.

**American Towman Commendation**

**Robert Bolus**, Bolus Truck Parts & Towing; Scranton, Pa.

Incident: Late on April 8, 2015, in Manatee, Florida, Robert Bolus was driving in a company car on I-75 when another car got on the expressway going the wrong way headed at him. "After all my years in the business, I immediately reacted to stopping the car," Robert said. He flashed his high beams repeatedly and stayed in the car's path and got the driver off to the side of the road, recognized she was impaired and got the keys from the ignition as he called 911. He held her there for police. "I think anyone in our industry a long time would have done the same thing," he said.



For courageous professionalism ... Robert Bolus.

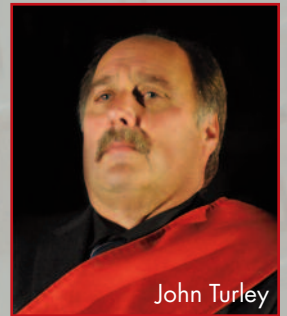
**American Towman Commendation**

**James Turley and John Wallace**, Turley Truck Service; Cranberry, Pa, and Wallace Towing; Harmony, Pa.

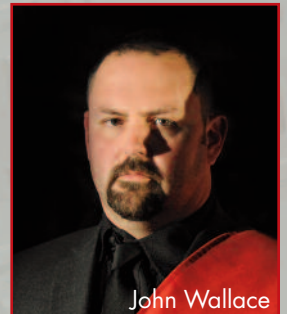
Incident: On September 8, 2014, in Jackson Township,

Pennsylvania, a tractor-trailer rolled over onto a pickup truck, trapping both drivers and pinning the smaller truck against a guardrail on a rural road. On scene, the fire chief called John Turley while police asked for Wallace as the rotation tower. Both arrived and worked the scene together to stabilize the semi, lift it steadily and slide it just enough to attach to the pickup underneath and winch it free for emergency personnel to extricate the driver, who did recover.

For courageous professionalism ... James Turley and John Wallace.



John Turley



John Wallace

**American Towman Commendation**

**Mike Kollman**, Hillside Auto Sales & Service; Springfield, Vt.

Incident: On December 23, 2014, in Rockingham, Vermont, it was a cold, snowy night when a victim became pinned under her own car off the road following a single-car rollover. Firefighters were on-scene, but unsuccessful in stabilizing the car to free the victim when Mike Kollman arrived. He was able to hookup his rotator and lift the car straight up off the victim in the only way she could be freed without further injury.

For courageous professionalism ... Mike Kollman.

**American Towman Commendation**

**Richard Growe Jr**, Powder Mill Towing, Parsippany, N.J.

Incident: On July 29, 2015, in Saddlebrook, New Jersey, Richard Growe Jr. was passing an accident scene and observed a DOT worker pinned under a vehicle—by-standers were trying to free the victim as there were no emergency responders on scene yet. Richard pulled over and was able to use his truck's stinger to lift the vehicle off the worker, who survived after spending more than a month in hospital.

For courageous professionalism ... Richard Growe Jr.

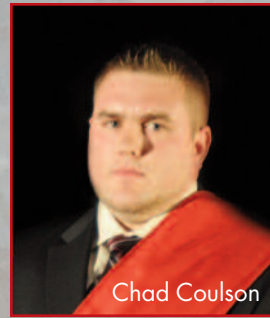
**American Towman Commendation**



**Chad Coulson, Ty Coulson, Greg Reline and Jimmy Orr**  
Bill's Towing; Bridgeport, Ohio

Incident: On January 9, 2015, in Bridgeport, Ohio, after a sudden snow squall, a car was struck by a semi on I-70 and the driver was thrown from the car and became trapped under the semi's tractor against the median wall with her right arm under the driver's side tire. Police blocked off the other side of the expressway for a rotator from Bill's Towing, which was on-scene within 14 minutes of the dispatched call. Chad Coulson, Ty Coulson, Greg Reline and Jimmy Orr worked together on the scene to hook up to the semi's axle, swing the boom and lift the cab enough to free the victim within five minutes of arrival. Pics show clear, cold day with snow on highway, traffic flowing in lanes next to scene. Police said they saved 20 minutes of extrication time for EMS, and likely saved a life.

For courageous professionalism ... Chad Coulson, Ty Coulson, Greg Reline and Jimmy Orr.



Chad Coulson



Ty Coulson

*American Towman Commendation*

# Silver Star

## The Joe Doblmeier Memorial Award

Steve Rhine has always been a great fan of American Towman, always reading its pages, always coming to the American Towman Exposition where he often gave Joe Doblmeier and Steve Calitri help where needed; many years helping to usher trucks in and out of the wrecker pageant; one year conducting a seminar on incident management.

Steve Rhine was a 17 year old kid who went to work at an American Gasoline Station in 1971, eventually driving the station's only wrecker. He was thrilled. But in 1973, while out carousing with friends about his hometown of Cockeysville, the driver lost control of the car, and flipped over, throwing Steve out onto the ground. When paramedics arrived, Steve told them he couldn't move his legs.

Steve's jaw, ankles and back had been broken. From that moment on to the present he was paralyzed from the waist down; only muscles in his thigh area were still active. It took eight months to heal inside the hospital, and another four months of rehabilitation to be able to operate a wheel chair and then walk with crutches and leg braces.



His boss at the station brought him back to help out in the office, but soon Steve was restless and he set out to prove to the State of Maryland that he could drive a car and truck as well as you and I could, in spite of having no feeling below the knees and below the waist in his back.

In 1978 Steve bought his first Chevrolet and Jerr-Dan carrier and started Rhine's Towing, buying a Sinclair gas station with five service bays and a storage yard in Cockeysville, Maryland. By the mid-eighties he owned and operated nine trucks and employed seven drivers.

Towing and recovery was his life but he was able to take a break now and then to marry and father four children.

In 2004 Steve received the American Towman Medal for being first on the scene of an accident and helping to rescue a driver trapped in his car that had crashed off I-95, a feat that required maneuvering himself over a guardrail to get to the victim.

For overcoming adversity and inspiring an industry, Steve Rhine earned the Joe Doblmeier Memorial Award, the American Towman Silver Star.