NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Presents New York State Senate Liberty Medals to Members of the Cuba Fire Department

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Volunteer first responders honored for their valiant efforts

CUBA – Members of the Cuba Fire Department who braved intense fire and weather conditions to rescue domestic violence victims' advocate Shannon Pepper, after flames erupted from her Erin's Isle Apartment last February, were honored for their efforts on Tuesday.

Firefighters Matt Quinn, Jeremy Thompson, Seth Dunning, Zachary Nutt and Alan Sweet, and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) Shawnday Dunning and Linda Botens, who each played a pivotal role in freeing Ms. Pepper from the apartment were awarded New York State Senate Liberty Medals, one of the highest civilian honors that a New York State resident can receive, from state Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I- Olean).

On February 21, 2015, members of the Cuba Fire Department arrived on the scene of a working structure fire at the Erin's Isle Apartment complex. Inside, Shannon Pepper, a noted domestic violence victims' advocate was trapped. Members of the department entered the home and extricated Ms. Pepper. Tragically, she later succumbed to her injuries.

"Volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers are often called upon to respond in some of the harshest conditions, often not knowing the status of a neighbor in need when they arrive on the scene," said Senator Young. "That was certainly the case for

the brave men and women who risked their lives to reach Shannon on that fateful February morning. Matt, Jeremy, Seth, Zachary, Alan, Shawnday and Linda are heroes, and it is humbling to have the opportunity to acknowledge them as such.

"Their selfless actions, risking personal safety for the sake of another, stand as an inspiration for us all. Their service highlights a compassion toward others that knows no bounds and a dedication to duty and community which never wavers, no matter the task before them. I applaud each and every one of them for their actions and am honored to present them with the Senate's Liberty Medal, in proud recognition of their service."

Dave Hardman, Chief of the Cuba Fire Department, said, "Our volunteers put in massive amounts of time training for situations just like this. This is a prime example of how that dedication is put into action. They did a phenomenal job under difficult circumstances. As their Chief, I couldn't be prouder of them."

In 2013, Shannon Pepper was the victim of a brutal assault at the hands of her then-boyfriend, Anthony Nevone. The attack nearly killed her and ultimately left her comatose for about a month. Nevone, a repeat violent offender, had previously served prison time for another domestic abuse case. After recovering from her horrific injuries, Shannon worked with the Cattaraugus County District Attorney's office to build a case against her attacker who was ultimately sentenced to two decades in prison and five years of post-release supervision. Shannon then became an outspoken advocate for domestic violence victims and used her personal tragedy to fight for the protection of others by advocating for "The Domestic Violence Protection Act – Brittany's Law."

In the wake of Shannon's passing, her mother Linda and step-father, Thomas Randolph, traveled across the state to share her story with others, in hopes of getting Brittany's Law enacted.

The New York State Senate Liberty Medal was established in 2014 as the highest honor a Senator can bestow upon a constituent. It is awarded to individuals who have merited special commendation for exceptional, heroic, or humanitarian acts on behalf of their fellow New Yorkers.

At the department's annual banquet in April, Firefighters Matt Quinn, Jeremy Thompson, Seth Dunning, Zachary Nutt and Alan Sweet were each named the Cuba Fire Department's Fireman of the Year for their efforts in the rescue of Shannon

Pepper.

Video of the event is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8a9QqiXXm0
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