

News from Senator Catharine M. Young 57th Senate District

Representing Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and portions of Livingston County



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OLEAN COUPLE AWARDED LIBERTY MEDALS FOR SAVING MAN

Becky and Tom Simsick honored by Senator Young for rescuing unconscious Bradford, Pennsylvania, man from pickup moments before it burst into flames



*Senator Young honored Tom and Becky Simsick for their heroic rescue of Joshua Lightner.
Left to right: Joshua Lightner, Senator Young, Tom Simsick & Becky Simsick.*

OLEAN – An Olean couple who risked their own safety to rescue a man after his pickup truck struck a tree were honored by Senator Catharine Young (R, C, I – 57th District) with Liberty Medals, the highest recognition bestowed by the New York State Senate.

Becky and Tom Simsick were preparing to kayak at the Marilla Reservoir in Bradford, Pennsylvania, when a pickup truck struck a nearby tree and began leaking gasoline.

Running to the truck, they found the driver, Joshua Lightner of Bradford, injured and unconscious. With the engine smoking and the smell of gasoline rising around them, the

Simsicks pulled Mr. Lightner from his truck and carried him to safety. Moments later the truck burst into flames.

“Risking their own lives, Becky and Tom rushed to the aid of a complete stranger,” Senator Young said. “Firefighters arriving on the scene right after the rescue found the truck fully engulfed in flames. Police and firefighters said that if they had not acted when they did, Mr. Lightner could have died or been severely injured.”

Established in 2014, the New York State Liberty Medal is the highest honor a Senator can bestow upon a constituent. It is awarded to individuals who merit special recognition for exceptional, heroic or humanitarian acts.

“A hero is someone who acts to save another without thought to the risks to themselves,” Senator Young said. “Tom and Becky are certainly heroes and they deserve our thanks and recognition.”

The Simsicks said they had to act, knowing the pickup could burst into flames at any second.

“Right after the crash, I told Tom, ‘We’ve got to get him out,’” Mrs. Simsick said. “We knew the truck could catch fire at any moment.”

Mr. and Mrs. Simsick were presented with Liberty Medals and New York State Senate Resolutions by Senator Young during a ceremony in her District Office in Olean. The event was attended by Joshua Lightner and his mother, Christa Tomey, who expressed their profound gratitude to the couple.

“Tom and Becky are an example to us all and they embody the reason the Liberty Medal was created. I was honored to be able to present them with their medals,” Senator Young said. “It’s everyday heroes like the Simsicks who make our community such a wonderful place to live and raise a family.”

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