



# President salutes heroes on Medal of Honor Day

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By **Pentagram Staff Writer**

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ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, Va. -- A cadre of heroes joined with the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation to honor and celebrate the American spirit of selfless service March 25.

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Thirty-five of the surviving 98 Medal of Honor recipients met at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery to both pay tribute to their fallen comrades-in-arms and to honor three civilians who performed feats of bravery outside of combat with the "Above and Beyond Citizen Honors."

President Barack Obama joined four of the medal recipients in a wreath-laying ceremony to commemorate National Medal of Honor Day. The president also personally thanked each recipient attending and shared a few words with them.

It's an honor, he said, to meet with our nation's war heroes and share this day with them.

After the wreath-laying, the medal recipients joined with the leaders of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society to award three civilians a special honor for heroism. Jeremy Hernandez of Minneapolis, Minn.; David Bryan of Kansas City, Mo.; and Rick Rescorla of New Jersey (awarded posthumously) were recognized by the group and its members.

Hernandez was returning from a field trip on a school bus with a group of children when the bridge they were on collapsed. The bus landed upright on the banks of the Mississippi River, close to a burning truck. Hernandez quickly opened the rear emergency exit and ensured everyone on the bus had made it to safety before he followed them away from the wreckage.

Bryan witnessed an automobile accident on eastbound I-70 near Higginsville, Mo. After seeing a truck collide with another car, he ran to the scene and pulled a passenger from the burning wreck.

Rescorla worked in the World Trade Center in New York City. On Sept. 11, 2001, after

the first plane hit the north tower, he disobeyed his bosses and called for an evacuation of his office. He led more than 2,700 employees of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter & Co. to safety, returning to the building to try to help more people evacuate. He died when the towers collapsed.






"I, along with all of the living Medal of Honor recipients, salute Rick Rescorla, David Bryan and Jeremy Hernandez for their selfless acts," said Bruce Whitman, co-chairman of the board of the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation. "As true heroes among us, these three remarkable recipients epitomize the Above & Beyond Citizen Honors concept of 'service above self' by representing the values of courage, sacrifice and selfless service. Their actions are an inspiration to Americans everywhere."

The three award recipients were chosen by a panel of judges, all Medal of Honor recipients. The nominations were narrowed down to 51, one from each state and the District of Columbia. The three finalists were chosen based on their selflessness and bravery in serving others in an emergency.

"It just doesn't get any better than this, our nation's quintessential heroes lifting up civilians who have also demonstrated exemplary selflessness, courage, love of country and service to their fellow man. Just imagine where our country would be, were we all to live by such values," said David J. McIntyre, Jr., Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation board member and TriWest Healthcare Alliance President and CEO.

(Ian Graham writes for the Pentagonagram at Fort Myer, Va.)

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