

Placer County deputy earns state Medal of Valor

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger today awarded the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor, California's highest public safety award, to 10 law enforcement officers for their outstanding commitment to the people of California.

Placer County Deputy Ken Skogen was one of those recipients.

On Aug. 30, 2009, Placer County deputies responded to the area of Rock Creek Road and Highway 49 for reports of an uncontrolled fire. While evacuating a burning residential neighborhood, Skogen was approached by a frantic male adult with a report that a woman was trapped in her burning home. The residence was fully engulfed in flames. As he came to a bedroom window, Skogen looked in and saw an elderly woman standing with her walker and staring back out at him. The woman was confused and in a state of shock.

Skogen broke the window and pleaded with the woman to come to him. She wouldn't walk forward and it was too high to pull her out. Knowing time was reducing his options, Skogen ran to the rear door and kicked it open. Realizing he had but a few seconds to save the woman's life, he pried the woman's hands from the walker. He lifted her into his arms and carried her out of the smoke filled house and down the street to safety. The house completely burned to the ground moments later.

"Hollywood can't dream up heroes as amazing as those we are honoring here today," Schwarzenegger said in a statement. "These public safety officers are our real-life action heroes who have shown extraordinary strength and character in the line of duty. On behalf of all Californians, I thank them for their service and dedication to the people of this great state."

Effective since 2003, the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor Act gives the governor the authority to award a Medal of Valor to one or more public safety officers who are cited by the attorney general for extraordinary valor above and beyond the call of duty. The Medal of Valor is the highest state award to a public safety officer.

Other winners include: officers Rodney Richards and Jason Smith, California Highway Patrol; Sheriff Tom Allman, Mendocino County; Detective Eric Bradley, Lodi Police Department; Kevin Raffaelli and officers Rick Apecechea, Jeff Dellinges and Roberto Gonzalez, San Mateo Police Department; and Officer Kelley Merritt, Susanville Police Department.