



For Immediate Release:
Aug. 5, 2015

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New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association Honors Members *Firefighter of the Year and Union Member of the Year Earn Recognition*

A Buffalo professional firefighter who rescued two people from separate structure fires within a 15-hour span has been named firefighter of the year, the highest honor bestowed by the New York State Professional Fire Fighters Association (NYSPFFA).

Edmund Courtney Jr. – a 27-year veteran of the Buffalo Fire Department – was honored in July at a ceremony that took place at NYSPFFA’s annual convention in Ithaca.

Also honored was Yonkers Firefighter Barry McGoey, who was selected Union Member of the Year. Since 2006, McGoey served as vice president and acting president of Yonkers Local 628. He is now president of the local.

At 3 a.m., June 27, 2014, Courtney and other members of Local 282 responded to a wood-frame house under “heavy fire conditions” on the second and third floors. They received reports of a trapped victim, on the third floor. Before a hose line could be established, Courtney and other crew members went up the stairs to the third floor and split into two search teams.

Courtney and his search partner, Lt. Michael Seltz, located the man amid the smoke and flames, struggled to carry him 40 feet to the stairwell and transferred him to another crew, whose members brought him down the stairs to safety.

Earlier on the same shift, Courtney and Firefighter Michael Dougherty rescued a man under similar extreme fire and smoke conditions in a multifamily home.

Courtney also was recognized for being part of a crew that rescued two 13-year-old girls who were trapped in the upper levels of an abandoned grain elevator in March 2014. The firefighters trekked seven-tenths of a mile with several ladders and rescue equipment in 20-degree weather to reach the girls. Placing ladders in precarious and potentially dangerous positions, they ascended the inside of the grain elevator and led the girls slowly down to safety.

“Ed Courtney distinguished himself with his brave and selfless acts, and we, along with his colleagues in the Buffalo Fire Department, were proud to acknowledge his courage,” said NYSPFFA Mike McManus. “And Ed

would be the first to reject this special recognition and instead praise the brave firefighters who were by his side during these rescues and who had their backs covered in case something went wrong.”

Union Member of the Year Barry McGoey, from Yonkers, is described as a selfless, natural leader who has put union business and the welfare of his fellow members ahead of personal interests his entire 15-year career.

“Local 628 has endured years of turmoil and contention regarding budgeting and staffing issues, and Barry has immersed himself in the details of union leadership,” McManus said. “He has become an expert on labor law, and he employs reason and tenacity as he fights for members’ rights and the safety of the community.”