



Santa, LeBovidge, RVPs Present 2020 and 2021 Archie League Medal of Safety Awards and Region X Commitment to Safety Awards During Special Event in New Orleans



NATCA on June 17 held a special event in New Orleans to honor the 2020 and 2021 Archie League Medal of Safety Award winners and Region X Commitment to Safety Award winners. The honored members make up the 16th and 17th annual groups of Archie League Award recipients and fourth and fifth annual Region X Award recipients.

During his introductory remarks, NATCA President Rich Santa thanked all of the members being honored for their commitment to excellence and safety. He added, "Tonight, we acknowledge the exceptional efforts of each and every one of you, for giving half of your life to the fathers and the mothers and the families on the other side of that microphone. Because all of those people relied upon you to give half your life so they didn't have to give a moment of theirs."

Santa and Executive Vice President Andrew LeBovidge hosted the event and worked with each regional vice president to introduce, honor, and celebrate each award winner. Details below.

[View Santa's introductory remarks](#)

The 2021 Winners

17TH ANNUAL Archie League Medal of Safety Award Winners

CENTRAL REGION

Central Regional Vice President Aaron Merrick presented Kansas City Center (ZKC) members Ingrid Owens, Brett Rolofson, and Taylor Rosenbaum with the 2021 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Central Region.

(Pictured from left to right:

LeBovidge, Rosenbaum, Owens, Rolofson, Merrick, and Santa.)



Rolofson is just the third NATCA member to receive the Archie League Medal of Safety Award more than once in the 17-year history of the program.

“We all understand what it’s like to work regular traffic and then understand that when there is a special need, a high-intensity situation, that everybody knows that it just takes a village to start helping the controller get the resources that they need, so they can focus, zone in, and really do their job,” Rolofson said.

[Video: Award presentation](#)

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EASTERN REGION

In September 2020, a Mooney M20 was at 4,600 feet and suffered a total engine failure. Potomac TRACON (PCT) member Joe Mash talked with the pilot and worked with fellow PCT members Jason Dunaway and Chris Rhodes to help the flight return safely to IAD. For their efforts, Eastern Regional Vice President

Brian Shallenberger presented the members with the 2021 Archie League

Medal of Safety Award. (Pictured from left to right: LeBovidge, Mash, Shallenberger, and Santa.)

“These controllers have been doing this job for a long time and when these emergencies happen, they and their colleagues are surrounded by unsung professionals,” Shallenberger said. “Today, we say thank you to them.”

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GREAT LAKES REGION

In the late afternoon of June 16, 2020, Indianapolis Center (ZID) member Matt Wyrick was alerted to a Cessna 441 Conquest II (N441LS) pilot with suspected hypoxia. Wyrick’s expert assistance for the pilot was recognized with the 2021 Archie League



Medal of Safety Award for the Great Lakes Region. This marks the fourth time ZID members have represented the Great Lakes Region in the 17-year history of the Archie League Awards.

“Matt says this award is a reflection of everybody that he works with,” Great Lakes Regional Vice President Drew MacQueen said. “He’s right, but we are nonetheless very proud of his work and the way that he represents the Great Lakes Region today.” (Pictured, from left to right: LeBovidge, MacQueen, Wyrick, and Santa.)

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NEW ENGLAND REGION

When a normal flight turned worrisome as a pilot appeared to climb instead of follow instructions to start descending, Boston Center (ZBW) member Casey Allan used his training and 15 years of experience and jumped into life-saving action, despite the clear indication that something



was very wrong. Thanks to Allan's efforts, the pilot landed safely, and New England Regional Vice President Mick Devine accepted the 2021 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the New England Region, on behalf of Allan, who could not attend the presentation.

"It makes me feel proud and happy that I was able to do my job," Allan said. "You don't want to be in that situation, but at the same time, knowing you

can handle it makes me feel glad that I was there because it worked out for everybody."

[Video: Award introduction](#)

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NORTHWEST MOUNTAIN REGION

Northwest Mountain Regional Vice President Alex Navarro III presented Denver TRACON (D01) members Kevin Cleavland, Chris Keddie, and Adam Schulte with the 2021 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Northwest Mountain Region for their

assistance of United Airlines flight 328, a Boeing 777, that experienced engine failure and an in-flight engine fire.



"This was a dramatic event that played out on national television, from CNN to local outlets and around the world," Navarro said. "The fact that there were no injuries as a result of this incident is a truly astounding fact. I believe it is due to the professionalism and experience of our members involved, and the training and skill of the flight crew."

Cleavland and Chris Keddie accepted the award on behalf of themselves and Schulte. *(Pictured from left to right: LeBovidge, Navarro, Keddie, Cleavland, and Santa.)*

[Video: Award presentation](#)

[Video: Event highlights](#)



SOUTHERN REGION

Even though it did not appear on radar, Greensboro ATCT (GSO) member Noah Walker recognized a large drone flying in the vicinity of the runway and creating a serious safety hazard for airport users. For his quick actions to prevent a collision and ensure the

safety of the users in the airspace, Southern Regional Vice President Jim Marinitti presented Walker with the 2021 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Southern Region. *(Pictured left to right: LeBovidge, Marinitti, Walker, and Santa.)*

“We are proud to recognize Noah’s professionalism and skill to identify this serious hazard even though it wasn’t on radar,” Marinitti said. “One pilot commented on frequency, ‘Thanks for looking out for us.’”

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SOUTHWEST REGION

Houston TRACON (I90) member Joe Wright accepted his 2021 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Southwest Region in recognition for his life-saving assistance of a Piper Cherokee pilot who had lost his gyroscope in difficult weather conditions in Houston Hobby (HOU) airspace.



“Joe’s unflustered demeanor, attention to detail, and professionalism throughout this incident were exemplary,” Southwest Regional Vice President Nick Daniels said. *(Pictured, from left to right: LeBovidge, Daniels, Wright, and Santa.)*

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WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

On a midnight shift in August 2020, the crew of FedEx 1026 was on approach to Los Angeles International Airport and ended up making an emergency landing with only the nose and the right gear down. Los Angeles ATCT (LAX) members Jeremy

Hroblak, Scott Moll, and CJ Wilson displayed seamless teamwork to assist the aircraft to a safe landing, despite numerous challenges and through extensive coordination.

Afterwards, to the controllers of LAX, pilot FedEx Captain Bob Smith said, "Thank you for your professionalism, and for your significant contribution to an aircraft incident that, because of your actions, ended with a safe landing and minimal damage to our aircraft."

Western Pacific Regional Vice President Joel Ortiz presented Moll, Hroblak, and Wilson with the 2021 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Western Pacific Region for their skill and professionalism throughout the flight assist. *(Pictured, from left to right: LeBovidge, Ortiz, Moll, Wilson, Hroblak, and Santa.)*

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PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Each year the NATCA President selects for the President's Award the most outstanding flight assist of the year. This year the President's Award winners from 2021 received their award during this special event.

NATCA President Rich Santa selected 2021 Western Pacific Region Archie League Medal of Safety Award winners Los Angeles ATCT (LAX) members Jeremy Hroblak, Scott Moll, and CJ Wilson, as the 2021 President's Award recipients.



Robert Smith, captain of FedEx 1026 heavy the morning of this incredible save, wrote a statement in support of their award, describing the controllers' assistance with the aircraft's emergency landing with only the nose and the right gear down.

"Nearly 45 minutes from the first indication that we had a problem, and after definitively ascertaining from the tower that our left gear was completely retracted, we safely landed our stricken aircraft amid a shower of sparks on runway 25R , the longest runway at LAX," Smith said in his statement. "Thank you for your professionalism, and for your significant contribution to an aircraft incident that, because of your actions, ended with a safe landing and minimal damage to our aircraft."

[Video: Award presentation](#)

2021 Region X Commitment to Safety Award



Barry Hammer (Engineers New England, ENE), Cindy Hirsch (Engineers/Northwest Mountain, ENM), and Terry Washington (Engineers Southern Region, ESO) are the NATCA members who are the leads for their respective FAA regions for the Runway Incursion Mitigation (RIM) safety-related program from the

FAA Office of Airports (ARP). They are managing the RIM program on behalf of their regions, working in concert with regional and national FAA staff to execute it.

For these members' work on design, procedures, outreach, education, and data analysis, Region X Vice President Brad Davidson, P.E., presented them with the Region X Commitment to Safety Award for 2021. Hirsch and Washington accepted the award on the three members' behalf. *(Pictured from left to right: LeBovidge, Davidson, Washington, Hirsch, and Santa.)*

[Video: Award presentation](#)

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The 2020 Winners

16TH ANNUAL ARCHIE LEAGUE MEDAL OF SAFETY AWARD WINNERS

ALASKAN REGION

Alaskan Regional Vice President Clint Lancaster presented Anchorage Center (ZAN) member Matthew Freidel and Anchorage TRACON (A11) member John Newcomb with the 2020 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Alaskan Region. *(Pictured from left to right: LeBovidge, Lancaster, Newcomb, Freidel, and Santa.)*



"This was a great example of teamwork in every respect," Lancaster said. "Matthew and John displayed teamwork, professionalism, and quick action."

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CENTRAL REGION

What very possibly could have been a tragic ending, turned into a safe landing thanks to Kansas City Center (ZKC) member Sarah Owens. For her efforts, Central Regional Vice President Aaron Merrick introduced her as the 2020 Archie League Medal of Safety Award winner for the Central Region.

"The more you peel away the layers of issues involved with this flight assist, the more you appreciate the experience, calm professionalism, and attention to detail shown by our honored controller from Kansas City Center," Merrick said.

Owens was not able to be present for the presentation of the award. Merrick accepted the award on her behalf and will present it to her in person in Kansas City.

CENTRAL REGION

Air traffic controllers are always aware of the possibility of wrong surface events. One such event nearly ended in tragedy at Wichita Airport in January 2020, but the terrific work of Wichita ATCT (ICT) members Hunter Rubin, Dean Hittner, and James Smart stopped it and ensured a safe outcome. For their



efforts, Central Regional Vice President Aaron Merrick presented them with the 2020 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Central Region.

“Our members there are a tight-knit team,” Merrick said. “They are experienced, focused, and work very well together.”

Smart and Hittner were unable to attend the award presentation. Rubin accepted the award on behalf of the three Wichita NATCA members. *(Pictured from left to right: LeBovidge, Rubin, Merrick, and Santa.)*

[Video: Award presentation](#)
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EASTERN REGION

The danger to Piper PA-28 pilot Karl Muller was real as he tried to navigate in IFR conditions above the Shenandoah Valley in western Virginia. Potomac TRACON (PCT) member Mark Dzindzio came to his rescue.

“It means a lot because I get to say thank you,” Muller said of a virtual

meeting he had with Dzindzio and other PCT controllers. “It was life changing because they saved me in the clouds.”

Eastern Regional Vice President Brian Shallenberger presented Dzindzio with the 2020 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for his efforts. "I really love this flight assist because the job done by Mark exemplifies the great work done every day by members of the Eastern Region," Shallenberger said. "The result was not only a safe landing, but a grateful pilot who learned from this experience." (Pictured from left to right: LeBovidge, Dzindzio, Shallenberger, and Santa.)

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GREAT LAKES REGION

The pandemic was just getting started in March 2020, with so many unknowns, and traffic levels were still high. Cessna 172 Skyhawk pilot Dennis Tyner encountered icing conditions over east central Kentucky, and Indianapolis Center (ZID) member Bob Obma and



his fellow controllers had to work on the fly to come up with plans to help the pilot, despite closed airspace and re-routes due to pandemic issues.

"Bob is an experienced pilot himself and that was key in this save. He was intently focused on the pilot's airspeed and altitude," MacQueen said. For Obma's efforts, MacQueen presented him with the 2020 Archie League Medal of Safety Award. (Pictured, from left to right: LeBovidge, MacQueen, Obma, and Santa.)

[Video: Award presentation](#)
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NEW ENGLAND REGION

Boston TRACON (A90) member and eight-year veteran air traffic controller Dave Chesley was instrumental in saving the life of Cessna 172 pilot Lihan Bao, on a foggy evening after she declared an emergency upon hitting something. For his efforts, Chesley was honored with the 2020 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the New England Region.

"Successful air traffic control is not simply about technical expertise," New England Regional Vice President Mick Devine said. "It

requires a cool and calm demeanor to let the pilot know that we are in this together and nothing will happen to you on my watch. Dave's performance exemplified that fact and helped save a life on that day."

Chesley was not able to be present for the presentation of the award. Devine accepted the award on his behalf and will present it to him at his facility.

[Video: Award introduction](#)

[Video: Event highlights](#)

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NORTHWEST MOUNTAIN REGION

"I just almost hit another mountain, I don't know where I am," said Idaho Cessna 182 pilot Tim Bendickson said on frequency to Seattle Center (ZSE) controllers in November 2019. Bendickson is alive today because of the actions of four ZSE NATCA

members — Byron Andrews, Joshua Fuller, Ryan Jimenez, and Michael Sellman — who helped get him out of a terrible situation.



"That, my brothers and sisters, is a passion for safety," Northwest Mountain Regional Vice President Alex Navarro III said. "It's a service to pilots on the highest level of professionalism and care. When they need us, they know we will be there.

Navarro presented Fuller and Sellman with the 2020 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Northwest Mountain Region on behalf of the team of four controllers. *(Pictured, from left to right: LeBovidge, Navarro, Sellman, Fuller, and Santa.)*

[Video: Award presentation](#)

[Video: Event highlights](#)

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SOUTHERN REGION

Thanks to the efforts of Pensacola TRACON (P31) member Marcus Troyer and the U.S. Coast Guard, the life of the pilot of a Cessna 172 Skyhawk, Scott Jeffrey



Nee, was saved after he crashed into a river bank in a remote area of Florida, and was seriously injured.

For Troyer's professional implementation of his training and experience, Southern Regional Vice President Jim Marinitti presented Troyer with the 2020 Archie League

Medal of Safety Award for the Southern Region.

"This was an extraordinary effort. It was a complex event," Marinitti said. "No doubt about it - Marcus saved a life that day." *(Pictured, from left to right: LeBovidge, Marinitti, Troyer, and Santa.)*

[Video: Award presentation](#)

[Video: Event highlights](#)

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SOUTHWEST REGION

Southwest Regional Vice President Nick Daniels presented Fort Worth Center (ZFW) members John (Randy) Wilkins and Christopher Clavin with the 2020 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Southwest Region. Wilkins and Clavin assisted a lost and distressed Cessna 150 pilot, helping him land safely at Chandler Municipal Airport (CQB).



"They demonstrated what is at the core of air traffic control - a calm professionalism, a dedication to safety, and a commitment to teamwork that are the hallmarks of our profession," Daniels said. *(Pictured, from left to right: LeBovidge, Daniels, Clavin, Wilkins with his son, and Santa.)*

[Video: Award presentation](#)

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SOUTHWEST REGION



Fort Worth Center (ZFW) members Larry Bell, Brian Cox, and Colin McKinnon assisted Pilot and flight instructor Anise Shapiro and her student to land in an open wheat field after Shapiro declared an emergency on a Pilots N Paws mission with six dogs in tow. For their efforts, Southwest Regional Vice

President Nick Daniels presented the controllers with the 2020 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Southwest Region.

“The teamwork and professionalism displayed by Brian, Colin, and Larry in responding to this in-flight emergency truly exemplifies the work done every day by the air traffic controller workforce,” Daniels said. “Through their training and experience, they were instrumental in ensuring the best possible outcome for not just the pilots but the six dogs on board as well.”

Bell and McKinnon accepted the award on behalf of themselves and Cox, who was unable to attend the event. *(Pictured, from left to right: LeBovidge, Daniels, Bell, McKinnon, and Santa.)*

[Video: Award presentation](#)

[Video: Event highlights](#)

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WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

San Diego ATCT (SAN) Michelle Bruner and Jamie Macomber helped a pilot whose throttle was not working properly to a safe, albeit nerve-rattling, landing. For their efforts, they were presented with the 2020 Archie League Medal of Safety Award for the Western Pacific Region.



“This was an inspiring example of quick action and teamwork by Shelly and Jamie,” said Western Pacific Regional Vice President Joel Ortiz. “I am thrilled that they are the first two winners of the Archie League Medal of Safety Award from San Diego Tower. It is a well deserved honor.” *(Pictured, from left to right: LeBovidge, Ortiz, Macomber, Bruner, and Santa.)*

[Video: Award presentation](#)

[Video: Event highlights](#)

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FEDERAL CONTRACT TOWER

Federal Contract Tower (FCT) controller Brad Burtner of Pompano Beach ATCT (PMP), leaning on his 46 years of experience, knew something wasn't right when he saw a Beechcraft Bonanza the touchdown on the landing

less than 10 feet above the ground, with landing gear up, and issued an immediate go-around.

"Brad's quick action prevented obvious serious damage to the aircraft," Southern Regional Vice President Jim Marinitti said. "Brad's dedication to this great Union is legendary. He has been there since the very beginning in 1987. It is such an honor to know Brad and work with him."

Marinitti presented the Archie League Medal of Safety Award to Burtner. *(Pictured from left to right: LeBovidge, Marinitti, Burtner, and Santa.)*

[Video: Award presentation](#)

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PRESIDENT'S AWARD

NATCA President Rich Santa selected the 2020 Southern Region Archie League Medal of Safety Award winner, Pensacola TRACON (P31) member Marcus Troyer, as the 2020 President's Award recipient. Thanks to Troyer's proactive collaboration with multiple entities, the life of pilot Scott Jeffrey Nee was saved.



[Video: Award presentation](#)

2020 Region X Commitment to Safety Award



Engineers New England member Al Arcese is a Civil Engineer and Project Execution Lead in the Boston Navigation and Landing Aids Engineering group, as well as the NATCA ATSAP-X Event Review Committee (ERC) representative. ATSAP-X covers Engineers and Architects, Flight Procedures Team, and Staff Support Specialists located in the ATO

Service Centers. It's a non-punitive safety reporting program that has greatly benefited our Region X members.

"Al is the epitome of advancing aviation safety through professionalism, dedication, knowledge, and influence," Region X Vice President Brad Davidson, P.E., said. "Simply put, he is brilliant, dedicated, and busy. Most importantly, he's a good friend to those of us who are privileged to know him."

For his profound dedication to ensuring the safety of the National Airspace System, Arcese received the Region X Commitment to Safety Award for 2020.

[Video: Award presentation](#)

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Our Book Honoring the Winners

We have produced a book about each 2020 and 2021 award winner and the great work that they did to earn these honors. [View a PDF of the book here.](#)



Resources

[View NATCA's awards webpage](#) | [Learn more about Archie League](#)
[View NATCA's Archie League Medal of Safety Award video library](#)

