

# TOWN OF VERNON

## Office of the Mayor

14 Park Place • Vernon, CT 06066

Tel: (860) 870-3600 • Fax: (860) 870-3580

[www.Vernon-CT.gov](http://www.Vernon-CT.gov)



### MEDIA ADVISORY

January 10, 2022

#### Press Contact:

David Owens, Communications Specialist

Desk (860) 870-3574

Cell (860) 494-5973



**Daniel A. Champagne**  
*Mayor*

**Michael J. Purcaro**  
*Town Administrator*

**Dawn R. Maselek**  
*Assistant Town Administrator*

## Heroism at Vernon Apartment Building Fire Featured on National Television Show

*'Hearts of Heroes' airs on ABC and can be viewed on YouTube*

**(VERNON, Connecticut)** – As fire swept through a large multi-family home at 80-82 Union Street last March, residents trapped on a third floor were in an extreme danger. Flames were pushing in behind them and smoke was everywhere.

But thanks to brave Vernon firefighters and police officers, a registered nurse from nearby Rockville General Hospital, an Air National Guard sergeant who lived next door, and Vernon's Town Administrator and Emergency Management Director, the two people trapped on the third floor were rescued.

The selfless acts of bravery that day are now being told in a documentary television series called "Hearts of Heroes," whose hosts and crew visited Vernon to interview the people who joined together that March afternoon to save the lives of those who were trapped.

"Hearts of Heroes" airs Saturday mornings on ABC television stations and showcases the stories of men and women braving natural disasters with one goal: to rescue the victims and help restore their lives.

**The episode featuring Vernon can be viewed by clicking here:**

*Click here*



Season 3, Episode 18: Five Alarm Fighters



The program's producers interviewed those involved in the rescue, including Vernon Firefighters Kevin Bowman, Blake St. John and Stan Landry, good Samaritans Brett Rinehart (a nurse at Rockville General Hospital), and Nathan Pisani (an Air National Guard Sergeant), Vernon Police Officer Allison Lawrence and Michael Purcaro, Vernon's Town Administrator and Emergency Management Director.

Each described what they saw that afternoon on Union Street and what they did after learning people on the third floor needed their help.

"Our first responders can always be counted on to give their all to help our residents," Mayor Dan Champagne said. "For 30 years, I've watched the men and women of this town place themselves in harm's way to help anyone in need. It's awe inspiring. But it's not surprising. These folks live to serve."

Landry and St. John climbed the ladder that came up about three feet short of the window, but despite that plucked the couple from danger. Bowman was the driver of the first truck to arrive at the scene, which carried that ladder that was essential to the rescue, and describes for viewers the unique way he was dispatched.

Rinehart, a former firefighter, grabbed the ladder off Bowman's truck and began to raise it toward the window where the people were trapped. The others, including Pisani, Lawrence and Purcaro, assisted by helping to move and then steady the ladder, even as hot embers fell on them and broken glass smashed on their heads.

"This was the right group of people in the right place at the right time," said Fire Chief Stephen Eppler, who is also featured in the program. "Without the selfless response by this group of people, we could have had a tragedy."

Purcaro, who had just left Town Hall, headed toward Union Street when he heard the fire and police departments get dispatched.

"This was truly an example of neighbors-helping-neighbors," Purcaro said. "The teamwork demonstrated that day exemplifies the strength and character of our Vernon community. I am grateful and proud of all who answered the call for help, especially our first responders who selflessly protect and serve our residents."

Hearts of Heroes is sponsored by BELFOR Property Restoration, whose CEO, Sheldon Yellen, travelled to Vernon to meet and interview those involved in the rescues.

### **About the Town of Vernon**

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of approximately 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford, and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in "New England's Knowledge Corridor" with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870- 3670 or visit [www.vernon-ct.gov](http://www.vernon-ct.gov).

###