



PRINCETON FIRST AID & RESCUE SQUAD INC.

Jeffrey A. Dooley, Investigations Manager
436 7th Avenue, Suite 1101
Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1841

Dear Mr. Dooley,

In a letter describing a car crash that left him badly injured shortly before his high school graduation, Michael Kenwood wrote, "I swore to myself that if I lived, I would learn the skills to care for myself and others should another medical emergency ever confront me again." He kept that promise, becoming an emergency medical technician (EMT) in college, and volunteering his time to help his campus community.

His desire to give back to his community continued long after his college graduation. Despite a budding career, as both a practicing attorney and owner of an information technology consulting business, and commitment to his wife and two-year old daughter, he continuously sought out opportunities to help others. One way in which he did this was by volunteering with the Princeton First Aid & Rescue Squad (PFARS) and becoming trained in technical rescue disciplines (motor vehicle extrication, ice rescue, confined space rescue, and swiftwater rescue). As an EMT and technical rescuer, Michael's courage, determination, and cool under pressure were manifest as he provided care for victims of life-threatening medical emergencies, newly born infants, and people stuck in tight domestic spaces, crashed cars, or elevators. They were similarly manifest in training exercises, which he embraced as part of his commitment to being prepared to perform rescues or deliver care unflinchingly and with the highest level of skill and professionalism.

Such was his intention on the evening of August 27, 2011, hours before Hurricane Irene wrought extraordinary damage upon the town of Princeton, New Jersey. After ensuring that his family was safely out of the storm's path, Michael drove to the PFARS headquarters to offer his assistance. He was not scheduled to be on duty, but he knew that as a swiftwater rescue technician, he had the skills necessary to help those who could be gravely affected by the looming storm. His friends and colleagues at the Squad were happy to have him there. In addition to being a skilled EMT and Rescuer, Michael was a mentor and source of comfort to everyone around him. Though he had only been a member of PFARS for three years, the Squad had benefitted from his presence in so many ways. Michael's unflappable optimism and extraordinary acts of kindness, bravery, and selflessness were so regular that they defined a level of "ordinary" that few people ever attain. Simply put, he was a beloved part of our EMS family.

At 4:38 AM on August 28, at the height of Hurricane Irene's winds and torrential downpour, PFARS and other emergency services agencies were dispatched to Rosedale Road in Princeton Township, in the area of Stony Brook, for a water rescue. When the crews, including Michael, arrived on the scene, they found a sedan partially submerged in two-foot deep floodwaters in the roadway, approximately seventy yards from the water's edge. Emergency personnel were unable to see whether the vehicle was occupied, but after repeated attempts to signal to the vehicle using spotlights and a PA system, the vehicle's rear taillights began to flash. Believing that people might have been trapped inside the vehicle and seeing the rising and quickening floodwaters as an imminent threat to their safety, Michael proceeded into the water on a tether in order to reach and rescue any victims. Michael and another

swiftwater rescue technician entered the water at 5:05 AM and were able to proceed approximately halfway to the vehicle before they were both swept from their feet by a rush of water. The haul team was unable to pull the rescuers back to shore and Michael was caught underwater in a stand of trees. The haul line was cut to free him from the trees and he was carried approximately 100 yards downstream with the current. When rescuers arrived at his location, they found Michael in cardiac arrest. Emergency services personnel on scene worked feverishly to save Michael, performing CPR and rushing him to the University Medical Center of Princeton. Through the efforts of the EMTs, nurses, and doctors, Michael's heart was restarted, but he remained unresponsive

As word of the incident spread, Michael's family and friends gathered in the intensive care unit of the hospital, utilizing every resource they could to find passable roads and flights to get to his side. Everyone prayed for him to regain consciousness.

He never did. Late in the evening of August 28, Michael succumbed to his injuries. He was 39 years old.

It was later determined that the car was empty – the flashing taillights were likely caused by a malfunction of the car's electrical system as it filled with water. The fact that there was no victim, per se, to be rescued does not detract from Michael's intention when he entered the water to aid somebody whose life was in danger. Instead, Michael's resolution in the face of the great uncertainty of the situation is a testament to his courage – few men or women possess the bravery to attempt such a rescue for a confirmed victim, much less for one that may not actually exist.

Michael's death resonated across the country, as stories of his commitment to helping others and his untimely passing spread through close-knit networks of first responders and the media. Inspired, humbled, and deeply affected by this tragedy, hundreds of rescuers who had never met Michael came from throughout and beyond New Jersey to attend the funeral and pay tribute to the bravery and sacrifice he exhibited in his death. Those of us who did have the privilege of knowing him, who had long been inspired by his many virtues, attended instead to pay tribute to the love, generosity, and selflessness he exhibited in his life.

Based on the danger that he knowingly faced and succumbed to in an effort to help a person or people whom he believed to be imperiled, we would like to nominate Michael for the Carnegie Hero award. Below, I have included contact information for Michael's widow and a list of witnesses to the event who are willing to be contacted. On behalf of everyone who has been affected both by Michael's life and his death, we appreciate your consideration of this nomination.

Yours very truly,

Daniel Barson
On behalf of the Princeton First Aid & Rescue Squad