

2001

Captain Alan Zwegat
Firefighter/Paramedic Anthony Kosely
Firefighter/Paramedic Nathan Pennington

Willoughby Fire Department

On August 17, 2001, three Willoughby Firefighters became heroes by running into a burning building and saving a female's life. In less than a month, hundreds of police and firefighters in New York City ran into burning buildings, saved thousands of people, and hundreds of them made the ultimate sacrifice of their own lives. In both cases, firefighters disregarded their own safety to save their fellow man. In Willoughby, the firefighters came out.

Captain Al Zwegat, and firefighter paramedic Anthony Kosely and Nathan Pennington were among the fire crews that responded to a four condominium unit at the Big Turtle I complex. Arriving they found the unit fully involved with flames showing and heavy smoke present. The three firefighters made their way into one of the condos, and were deep inside when they located an unconscious female. They were able to evacuate her to safety.

Pennington stated that this was his first fire, and made him feel a connection with other members of his department. "It's like having a second family." Kosely felt that Captain Zwegat was the most deserving member of the crew for the award.

Zwegat is the only Lake County Firefighter to have received the Jorge Medina Distinguished Service award twice, having been previously honored in 1996. Zwegat stated that "in retrospect to September 11, it's hard to consider myself any kind of hero. In every city across the country, on any given day, any firefighter would have done the same thing."

Zwegat has retired and has relocated to Florida.

Their awards were presented at the annual Blue Coats banquet on February 6, 2002 at La Malfa Center.