

Captain David P. Dobbins Award

For excellence in Search and Rescue

Station MARQUETTE

Thank you for your extraordinary efforts resulting in the heroic rescue of a 21-year old surfer from the waters of Lake Superior on February 18, 2009. At approximately 5:00 pm that afternoon, your station received a distress call reporting a person in the water near the Presque Isle break wall in Marquette, MI. The person was surfing in extremely hazardous weather and surf conditions when he was washed over the break wall and began perilously drifting off shore. Ice-filled waters, eight to ten foot waves, 30-knot winds and visibility less than a quarter of a mile on scene prevented the launch of a Coast Guard standard boat or helicopter to attempt the rescue. As a Station Marquette ice rescue team crewmember, you immediately responded to the scene and, despite the prevailing weather conditions, developed an innovative strategy which leveraged your superb ice training capability and teamwork. After forming a tethered human chain and swimming over 50 yards in frigid water and pounding surf, you and your team reached the severely hypothermic surfer and pulled him to safety just moments before he lost consciousness. You transferred him to awaiting emergency medical services personnel and he was transported to a local hospital where he made full recovery.

Coast Guard Search and Rescue operations were clearly enhanced by your diligence, teamwork and superb creative rescue strategy. By virtue of your efforts, you have joined the ranks of individuals who perform distinguished Great Lakes Search and Rescue.



Jerome A. Popiel
Acting Chief, Incident Management Branch
Ninth Coast Guard District

Date



The Captain David P. Dobbins Award is presented in recognition of outstanding actions accomplished while prosecuting Search and Rescue missions on the Great Lakes. It links the outstanding performance of today to the heritage of Captain Dobbins, the first Superintendent of the U. S. Lifesaving Service's Great Lakes Ninth District in 1876. Captain Dobbins, a native of Erie, Pennsylvania, and a schooner master, distinguished himself by performing and organizing heroic rescue efforts for the Schooner *Oneida* in 1853, the Schooner *Comet* in 1860, and many others even before the Lifesaving Service was officially established. Interested in solving the problems of performing arduous rescue duties and improving early rescue craft, Captain Dobbins developed an innovative lifeboat that was self-righting, self-bailing, and less than half the weight of earlier designs. The Dobbins lifeboat was quicker, more maneuverable, and cost less than half of other rescue craft at the time, and elements of his design remain incorporated into today's rescue craft. His heritage, initiative and professionalism live on through today's Search and Rescue personnel.