



Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

3A
Agenda Item #

Requested Meeting Date: 08/08/17

Title of Item: Life Saving Award

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	Action Requested: <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <small>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</small>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*
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Submitted by: Sheriff Scott Turner	Department: Sheriff's Office
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Presenter (Name and Title): Sheriff Scott Turner	Estimated Time Needed: 5 minutes
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Summary of Issue:

Presentation of Life Saving Award to John E. Swanson

Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:

Recommended Action/Motion:

Financial Impact:

Is there a cost associated with this request? Yes No

What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$

Is this budgeted? Yes No Please Explain:

SCOTT A. TURNER
SHERIFF OF AITKIN COUNTY

217 Second Street NW, Room 185
Aitkin, MN 56431

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MEMO

TO: Aitkin County Board of Commissioners DATE: August 1, 2017

FROM: Sheriff Scott Turner RE: Life Saving Award

At the start of the board meeting on August 8th I would like to present a life-saving award to John Swanson for his actions on January 25th of this year. Attached is a story that ran in the *Aitkin Independent Age* about the incident.

The story talks about instincts I think that the actions have more to do with character.

I look forward to presenting this award at that meeting.

Any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

Thanks



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Swanson's instincts lead to a life-saving ordeal

Story Comments Image (2)

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Adam Hoogenakker photo

Posted: Monday, March 6, 2017 5:00 am

by Adam Hoogenakker | 0 comments

Fifteen minutes prior to walking to get the mail, Bob Hillman, 76, had spoken on the phone with his wife. He wouldn't talk to anyone again for more than four hours as he lay helpless and injured outside his home.

Around 4 p.m. Jan. 25, Bob stepped outside of his home south of Aitkin, wearing steel cleats and making use of a walking stick, but he still happened to fall, resulting in a broken hip and dislocated shoulder. Too injured to help himself, Bob began to holler for help.

Bob's wife, Karen, was in the cities babysitting their grandchildren.

"After he'd called me, he left his cell phone on the fridge," said Karen.

No one home and no cell phone, the odds were further stacked against Bob, starting with the fact a snow fence on his property prohibited drivers passing by from even seeing him. And the distances between homes meant someone was going to have to be outside to hear him.

That person would be John Swanson, but he didn't hear the calls for help until after 8 p.m., after returning from an evening of playing volleyball in Aitkin.

At his girlfriend's house just over a quarter-mile away (Swanson would later measure the distance), Swanson said he'd heard what he thought was an animal.

"We hear stuff all the time in the country," said Swanson. "The neighbors have cows and horses."

But hearing a second yell for help made Swanson think twice about what he'd heard the first time.

"I thought maybe it was a dog, but something wasn't right," said Swanson, who then got in his vehicle and drove down the road, stopped, and got out again to try

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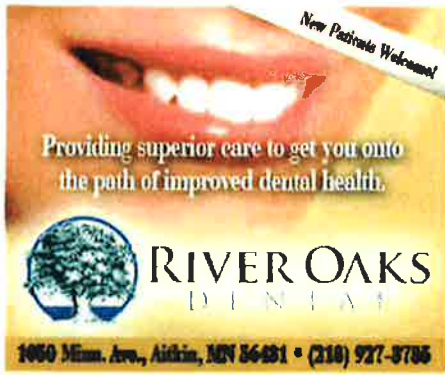
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to pinpoint where the noise was coming from.

At the intersection of Co. Rd. 12 and Bluebird Corner (295th St.), Swanson called out. That's when he heard Bob's plea for help, and was able to find him.

Swanson found Bob lying 50 feet from his home, in his pajama pants which were now frozen to the ground. Swanson covered Bob with his coat and called 911. For 10 minutes Swanson held Bob until first responders arrived.

"He's a real hero to our family," Karen said. "Without him, Bob would never have survived."

Swanson knows who the true hero is in this story.

"I was really glad he was strong enough to yell for help. I give all the credit in the world to him. He's a strong man," said Swanson.

The temperature outside was just below freezing that day, and when Bob's body temperature was taken in the ambulance, it was 92 degrees. He was hypothermic and had frost bite. According to Karen, after surgery and care at Cuyuna Regional Medical Center, he remains at the Crosby Care Center.

Keith Benz, a neighbor of the Hillmans, is hoping the county will recognize the efforts made by Swanson in saving Bob's life. Benz calls Swanson truly instrumental and is the sole person involved in Bob still being alive. Benz has sent a letter requesting Swanson be recognized for his role in the events of Jan. 25.

"He followed up on his instinct that something wasn't right," Benz said. "He called 911. Everything that led up to that saved Bob's life."

From a first responder's view –Tiffany Gustin

I am proud to be a member of the South Aitkin First Responders (SAFR). The group is designed to be "neighbors helping neighbors." Because we respond from our homes or places of work, sometimes we can get there before the ambulance can.

We obviously provide medical care where we can to help support the ambulance crew, and for Bob, several members of SAFR responded. When the call came through, I knew I wouldn't be first on scene, but Bob and his family are good friends. I knew Karen was out of town. I hoped that a familiar face would be comforting for Bob, and I knew Karen would appreciate having someone there to relay Bob's condition to her and their son Mike.

First responders sometimes perform CPR, splint limbs, stop bleeding, take patient histories, and call for air care, just to name a few things. But we have also shoveled snow, taken doors off hinges to give the ambulance crew access to a patient, comforted family members in stressful situations, and countless other tasks to make sure that medical teams and law enforcement can do their jobs.

For me, Bob's call was a perfect example of how being a first responder isn't always about providing medical care. I didn't do anything medically for Bob. But I was able to communicate medical history to the ambulance crew and give the family updates on what was going on.

Sometimes knowing the patient can make a call emotionally challenging, but those are the calls that can also be the most rewarding, no matter what role you played.

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Posted in Features on Monday, March 6, 2017 5:00 am

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