

Contra Costa County



Fire Protection District

## Press Release

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**Contact:** Vic Massenkoff, Fire Investigator  
925-941-3541 (Office)  
925-383-5034 (Cell)

### Contra Costa County Officials Honor Citizen Rescuer

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, City of Pittsburg, Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors and State Farm Insurance are honoring Daniel Hernak in recognition of his heroic actions which saved the lives of three persons from a residential structure fire in the City of Pittsburg this year.

The ceremony will take place at the beginning of the August 1<sup>st</sup> Pittsburg City Council meeting, at 7:00pm, at the Pittsburg City Hall. The ceremony will be attended by Mr. Hernak, the three persons he rescued, CCCFPD Chief Louder, County Supervisor Federal Glover and the Pittsburg City Council.

**Rescuer: Daniel Hernak** – single, 48 years old, born and raised in Pittsburg. His Grandmother, Katie DiMercio, was a resident of Pittsburg since 1919. His parents were residents of Pittsburg for over 50 years. He attended Village Elementary, Central Junior H.S. and Pittsburg Senior H.S. He is currently the Commercial Manager at O'Reilly Auto Parts in Concord

**Resident: Cylvia Williamson** - 90 years old, longtime Pittsburg resident/ business owner.

**Caretaker: Evangeline Raymundo** - 58 years old, Ms. Williamson's live-in caretaker for 8 yrs.

**Visitor: Lolita Raymundo** - 84 years old, Evangeline's mother-in-law, visiting for the week and assisting with Ms. Williamson's care.

On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at approximately 2:35am a fire started in the kitchen of the residence at 534 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Asleep upstairs in their respective bedrooms were 90 year old resident Cylvia Williamson and her 58 year old caretaker, Evangeline Raymundo. Also asleep upstairs was Ms. Raymundo's visiting 84 year old mother-in-law, Lolita Raymundo. Evangeline awoke to the smoke and heat from the fire downstairs as it began to fill the upper floor. She went to get Ms. Williamson and directed her mother-in-law to head for the front door. Evangeline managed to get Ms. Williamson and her mother-in-law past the raging kitchen fire that was at the bottom of the staircase and into the smoke and heat filled



living room. As they crawled along the floor Evangeline and her mother-in-law became disoriented and overcome by the smoke. Evangeline continued to drag Ms. Williamson along but eventually could not go on. Ms. Raymundo made it to within feet of the front door but was so overcome and disoriented that she could not find it. The women feared at that point they would perish in the fire.

At that time, Daniel Hernak was just leaving his friends house that was across the street. He saw smoke and flames coming from a side window of 534 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street and ran to the front door and began knocking on it to alert the residents. The door was locked and at first there was no answer. He began trying to force the door open when he heard Lolita Raymundo's cry for help from just inside the door. He guided her to the door with his voice and she was able to unlock it. As the front door opened Mr. Hernak was hit with a rush of smoke and heat. He got down low and was able to pull Ms. Raymundo out of the burning structure and out onto the lawn where she told him that there were others inside. Mr. Hernak rushed back and found he could only see several feet into the house through the front door. He then got down low and entered the house several feet and found Evangeline on the floor. Staying low, he grabbed her and pulled her out the front door. It wasn't until he had pulled her out of the smoke that he realized Ms. Williamson was holding onto Evangeline's legs and he was actually pulling two people out. A neighbor had already called 911 and Mr. Hernak then used a garden hose to try and combat the fire through the kitchen side window. Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Engine 84 soon arrived and Evangeline, Ms. Raymundo and Ms. Williamson were taken by ambulance to Sutter Delta ER where they were treated for first and second degree burns and smoke inhalation.

Although the fire severely damaged a large portion of the residence, due to Mr. Hernak's actions all three women survived the fire and have fully recovered from their injuries. If Mr. Hernak had not acted quickly and decisively, while placing his own life in great jeopardy, the very likely outcome of this fire would have been a much greater tragedy and the loss of three lives. Mr. Hernak's selfless actions show that he is an invaluable and contributing member of our community and is committed to the safety and well being of his fellow residents. Those whose lives he saved, the Contra Costa Fire Protection District and the City of Pittsburg will always remember and be grateful for Mr. Daniel Hernak's heroic actions. We recognize Mr. Hernak as an honorable role model within the community we serve to protect and as a member of our team as we strive to insure our public's safety.

**END**

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Vic Massenkoff, Investigator  
Fire Investigation Unit  
Contra Costa County Fire Protection District  
2010 Geary Rd.  
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523  
Office: (925) 941-3541 FAX: (925) 941-3609  
[vmass@cccfd.org](mailto:vmass@cccfd.org)

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