

Governor Mike Pence
An Act of Heroism Award Presentation – Michigan City
August 28, 2013
Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

We gather together today to celebrate heroism, specifically an act of heroism that included the teamwork and bravery of nearly 140 individuals and resulted in a life saved. Such a rescue occurred thanks to the swift thinking, bravery and collaboration of individuals working together to make the nearly impossible, possible. Today, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank those who, on a warm summer day in mid-July, refused to rest until they saved young Nathan Woessner.

On Friday, July 12, six year-old Nathan was trapped under eleven feet of sand for more than three hours.

At first, the family and first responders used their hands and shovels, tirelessly digging and pushing away the sand which stubbornly caved and fell back into place. Machinery from D&M Excavating, Woodruff and Sons and NIPSCO was soon called in to help.

Hoosier heroes quickly emerged in those present at the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

The scene that unfolded was, according to Michigan City Police Chief Mark Swistek, "breathtaking" and that if he hadn't witnessed it firsthand, he'd "have to tell you that this story would be unbelievable."

From the assistance of local police and fire departments and EMS workers, to area businesses who brought their excavation expertise and tools to the scene, to the Red Cross who shared food and water with the family and search teams, to the firefighter who felt Nathan's hand, to the everyday folks who ran to the scene to help and who, like the Woessner family, may have just been enjoying the beach on a summer vacation - every single one of you, in my book, is a Hoosier hero.

Members of the rescue and recovery efforts include representatives from the following groups:

- Michigan City Police Department
- Michigan City Fire Department
- National Park Service
- Michigan City City Hall
- The News-Dispatch
- NIPSCO
- Woodruff & Sons, Inc.
- D&M Excavating, Inc.
- Red Cross of LaPorte County
- LaPorte County Sheriff Reserves

- Police and Fire Chaplains
- Trail Creek Police Department
- Long Beach Police Department
- LaPorte County EMA
- Emergency Management Volunteers
- LaPorte County EMS
- E911 Dispatch Center
- Franciscan St. Anthony's Hospital
- University of Chicago Hospital
- UCAN/LIFESTAR Medical Helicopter
- Long Beach Fire Department
- Members of the Woessner family and close friends

Today, we rest easier knowing that there are thousands of other emergency and public safety professionals on watch every day, ready and able to assist. We can be proud of the caliber of our emergency and public safety professionals seen in action that day, as well as that of the doctors, nurses and medical professionals who have since then helped him recover.

In recent days, Nathan started first grade, and I'd wager his summer break was a little more exciting and a bit more surreal than those of his buddies.

This is thanks to you, the brave men and women who turned out to assist in unburying this young boy. With the help of some major machinery, buckets, hands, and, from what I understand, even the notepads of some of the reporters in attendance, as well as the top-notch care administered by several hospitals, Nathan joins us here today.

When I spoke to Gregory Woessner by phone shortly following the incident, he said to me, "This is everyone's miracle." As a father, I wholeheartedly agree.

To find your child in need of emergency assistance is a parent's worst nightmare. When the Woessners found themselves in that awful situation, they were fortunate to have public safety officials, public servants, and members of the public instantly exhibit a willingness to help, to bring their skills and resources to the table and say, "We can do this." Such attitudes, such selflessness, such generosity epitomizes the Hoosier spirit.

Gregory, Faith, Nathan – it is an honor to join you all here in Michigan City. Know that you will forever hold a place in my heart, as well as the hearts of Hoosiers across Indiana who have been inspired by your story and your strength.

And so while we are gathered today, I present An Act of Heroism to Michigan City Mayor Ron Meer to hang here in Michigan City City Hall to honor the 139 individuals who assisted in rescue and recovery efforts for what I understand is now called the Miracle at Mount Baldy. Your courage, commitment and persistence epitomize the character of our great state and illustrate

for the world the quality and compassion of Hoosiers. On behalf of my family, the Woessner family and Hoosier families everywhere, I thank you.

Thank you.