

Des Moines Register

Estimated printed pages: 2

November 10, 2008

Section: Metro Iowa

Edition: DM

Iowa disaster helper in running for CNN hero award

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Tad Agoglia's First Response Team assisted in Parkersburg, Burlington and Oakville.

By PAT SHAVER

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Tad Agoglia is humbled.

He is among 10 people in the world nominated for CNN's hero award. His recognition comes after his help in Parkersburg, Burlington and Oakville.

"I'm extremely excited. We've been on the road so much that we've been from disaster to disaster for 18 months," Agoglia said. "It's an unbelievable stamp of approval, it's also letting the whole world know about what I'm doing."

Agoglia leads the First Response Team, an organization that helps communities all over the country recover from disaster using heavy equipment and advanced technology, all for free.

"It's interesting; we've known that he is a hero since he arrived here. CNN just validates what we already know," said Parkersburg Police Chief Chris Luhring.

Agoglia and his crew spent 13 days in Parkersburg after an EF5 tornado ripped through the town of 1,900 in May. They helped recover important documents from City Hall, dug graves for the six people who died in the tornado, cleared roads and hauled hundreds of truckloads of debris.

They helped stop a factory's first floor from flooding in Burlington and used their cranes to transport thousands of sandbags in Oakville during summer floods.

"I've spent my whole life in disasters, and I've never seen anything like the people in Iowa," Agoglia said.

Luhring said Parkersburg is quickly recovering, and residents thank Agoglia and the many others who assisted.

"We've seen complete destruction but also complete compassion," Luhring said. "I think we're defying all expectations on recovery."

Agoglia returned to Parkersburg last week to see the progress and visit with residents.

"I came back, and I was in awe. It looks like the city is halfway built. That's unheard of; usually cleanup is still going on," he said.

The winner of the award will be decided by the public and announced by CNN at 8 p.m. Nov. 27.

CNN heroes

To check out the other CNN hero nominees, go to www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2008/cnn.heroes/index.html, or to vote directly for Tad Agoglia go to www.firstresponseteam.org/heroes/.

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