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Hero from Huntington in line for \$100,000

BY DEBORAH S. MORRIS

deborah.morris@newsday.com

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It was a rally befitting a hero. Balloons, dozens of supporters, signs with adoring phrases and a pipe and drum band -- all for a humble but excited honoree who had trouble admitting he was, well, a hero.

Huntington native Tad Agoglia, 32, was feted Monday at the Huntington Manor Fire Department in Huntington Station for his nonprofit organization First Response Team of America, which -- free of charge -- provides immediate emergency aid to areas hit by natural disasters. That work has landed Agoglia on a list of the top 10 nominees for CNN's Hero of the Year, which highlights everyday people doing extraordinary deeds.

"A lot of what we have been doing around the country the last 18 months has been somewhat under the radar," said Agoglia, surrounded by supporters including State Sen. Carl Marcellino, Town Supervisor Frank Petrone, town board member Stuart Besen and a host of volunteer firefighters, friends, family and students from the Smithtown Christian School, his alma mater. "So to get this national recognition is really encouraging."

Approximately 90 students, juniors and seniors from Smithtown Christian were accompanied by Katie Mauro, an English teacher who went to the school when Agoglia was a student. "He was such an adventurous guy," Mauro said. "I'm not surprised," that he did something like this.

The event at the firehouse was staged to help get out the online vote in support of Agoglia -- who grew up in Huntington Village and whose family still lives there -- so he can be named Hero of the Year. He has received \$25,000 for being in the top 10.

The public can vote at www.CNN.com/Heroes through Wednesday. The winner will be announced Thanksgiving night and will receive an additional \$100,000.

CNN initially received 4,000 nominations.

Agoglia created his organization in May 2007. Since then, he and his four-member crew have responded to 20 disaster sites across the country where, using specialized machinery, they do whatever work is needed.



Chris Luhring, police chief for Parkersburg, Iowa, knows firsthand the generosity of Agoglia and his crew. They arrived shortly after a devastating tornado blew through the community in May, killing several people, one a relative of Luhring.

"He just showed up and said, 'Where do you want me to work?' " Luhring said. "To have him come to Iowa, for no payment at all, and help -- he wouldn't take anything at all. That is just unbelievable humanity."

Agoglia and his crew have no home base. If it's tornado season, they may head to Missouri; if it's hurricane season, you can bet they are near the Gulf Coast.

"I have no home address" Agoglia said. "Where ever there is death and destruction, that's where we go."

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