



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Kansas City District

# News Release

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Contact: Thomas O'Hara  
(816) 983-3486

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## Heartland Award to be presented to local Milford couple for life saving effort

**Kansas City, Mo.** – On October 3, 2002, Col. Donald R. Curtis, Jr., district engineer for the Kansas City District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, will present a Heartland Award to Bill and Sue Coffman of Milford for their efforts in the rescue of nine people off Milford Lake during a storm last summer. The Heartland Award is given to individuals who are willing to go the extra mile in order to make our lakes a safer environment.

On June 18, 2002, ten family members and friends went boating on Milford Lake in a rented motor boat. That evening the wind was gusting over 30 miles per hour and at about 8:30 pm the boat started taking on water and then capsized. No one saw the boat go over and the 10 people hung on to the overturned boat. One individual left the boat and made it to shore and went for help.

At about 11 pm the Coffmans, owners of Russ Creek Marina, heard the call go out on the radio that a boat with nine people was missing. Bill immediately took out his boat and began searching for the missing people but by then it was totally dark and the lake was still very rough. Bill finally found the overturned boat where it had washed ashore in a remote area. The missing people were huddled together on the bank. He then went and notified a Conservation Officer who was also out in his patrol boat looking for the people. They went back to get the stranded people but the water was too shallow and the lake too rough for the patrol boat to get to the stranded people onshore. Bill took his own boat into the rough shallow water three times in order to get everyone back out to the patrol boat.

The nine people were very scared and cold. They transported them back to the marina where Sue Coffman then took care of the rescued individuals by giving them sweatshirts, blankets and coffee.

Col. Curtis is a strong supporter of the Water Safety Program in the Kansas City District and is very pleased to be able to present an award such as this. Too often the only news you hear about water safety is when someone has had a boating accident or there is a drowning. The presentation will occur at 1:30 pm at the Rush Creek Marina in Milford State Park. The presentation is open to the public and everyone is urged to attend this ceremony to honor the Coffman's for their efforts in the rescue.

For more information on the awards ceremony, contact Bradley Myers, operations manager at Milford Lake Project, at 785-238-5714. You may visit the Milford Project web site at [http://www.nwk.usace.army.mil/milford/milford\\_home.htm](http://www.nwk.usace.army.mil/milford/milford_home.htm)