



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Wes Shoemyer  
18<sup>th</sup> Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 434  
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the  
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**Contact: Kathy Armstrong  
(573) 751-7852**

# Local Heroes

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JEFFERSON CITY – One of the things that make me proud to live in northeast Missouri is the way folks help each other in times of need. This summer we have seen neighbors helping neighbors who were flooded out of their homes, and strangers volunteering to erect sandbag levees, and people just pitching in whenever and wherever they were needed. Nobody expects to be honored for helping others; they just do it out of a sense of community and a desire to help others. Sometimes, though, people take extraordinary risks to help others, and I want to tell you about two of those people who recently received the Meritorious Safety Award from the Missouri Department of Transportation, the agency's highest safety award.

On July 25, two young men from Illinois were traveling on Route 19 between Center and Perry when their car was washed off of the road in a flash flood. The two men, Ian Hughes and Garrett Pechenka, found themselves clinging to trees in the rapidly rising water of Dry Fork Creek.

Thomas Ragland, a signing crew member with MODOT's Hannibal facility, and Keith Golian, a MODOT maintenance worker from Center, heard about the flash flooding and went out to assess the situation. When they arrived, other motorists told them about a car that had been swept away by the floodwaters. After frantically searching the area with a floodlight, Golian finally heard someone screaming and yelled back that help was on the way. Ragland takes it from there:

“The boys were carried between 200 and 300 yards down the creek. We could hear them yelling. One of our guys had a couple of lassos, so he threw life jackets to the boys once we spotted them. We had to pull them in because the current was so strong.”

I just want to add my thanks to Thomas Ragland and Keith Golian for going out of their way to help others. I also want to again thank the countless citizens who helped their friends and neighbors during this year's severe weather. They may not receive awards from state agencies, but their efforts are appreciated just the same.

If you have traveled recently on I-72/US 36 in Hannibal between the Mark Twain Memorial Bridge and the hospital, you probably have noticed a difference in the way that section of pavement feels when driving over it. MODOT has repaved that section in a manner that allows water to drain down through the top, resulting in a safer roadway with better drainage. The ride is smoother, but motorists will probably notice more noise traveling over this new section. A lot of accidents have occurred in this area during wet weather, and hopefully this new surface will reduce the number of accidents on this stretch of road.

Finally, I want to thank Regina Faden for all of her hard work in making the Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum in Hannibal the nation's leading resource about this important Missouri author and humorist. Regina has been the executive director of the home and museum for the past four years but is leaving to become executive director of the Historic St. Mary's City in Maryland. We thank her for her service and wish her all the best.

If you have any questions or comments about this or any other issue, give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at [wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov](mailto:wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov), or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.