

# Canadian soldier says instincts helped him rescue a drowning man

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The festivities of Canada Day and the large crowds celebrating the country's birthday took a back seat to David Di Tommaso's instincts last summer.

When the 35-year-old Mississauga man saw a man floating face down in the water near Port Credit Marina, he says he didn't hesitate. He just jumped right in.

"It was pure instinct," Di Tommaso said. "I know it was pure instinct because I didn't even think of emptying my pockets."

Di Tommaso is the recipient of this year's Hero Award at the Mississauga Civic Awards, sponsored by The Mississauga Real Estate Board (MREB) and The Mississauga News.

Di Tommaso, a reserve soldier with the Canadian Armed Forces and a MiWay employee, was in the cabin of his docked boat on July 1 last year when he heard a splash. He looked out the window and saw the man and started shouting for help before jumping into the water.

Di Tommaso recalled thinking for a moment about getting his life-jacket, but believed time was of the essence.

"If I had ran to where my life-jacket was stored, I wouldn't have been able to retrieve the guy," he said. "You have seconds, or else it's hopeless."

He swam to the unconscious man and managed to flip him onto his back. Di Tommaso, who lives in the City Centre, said the older man wasn't breathing.

Di Tommaso got the man's head above water and swam him



Rob Beintema/Metroland

David Di Tommaso

back to the dock but wasn't strong enough to lift the unconscious man's body onto the deck.

Thankfully, he recalled, he was washing his boat that day and the hose was still out. So, he used the hose to try to pull him and the man in.

Vince Pietracupa, owner of Bristol Marine Ltd., said one of his employees heard Di Tommaso's cries for help and both went over to see what was happening.

"He was a really big guy and they couldn't get him out of the water so we just tried to help the best we could," said Pietracupa. "If it wasn't for (David), this guy would have been a goner."

According to police, the victim was treated at the scene before being released.

Di Tommaso said he is just one of several people who should be credited for helping the man. They include the Bristol Marina employees and Mississauga firefighters, who responded quickly and tended to Di Tommaso afterward.

"I felt like I was part of a team," he said.

-with files from Chris Clay