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### **Gardner-Webb Alumnus A.J. Carey and His Wife Receive National Red Cross Awards**

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# Gardner-Webb Alumnus A.J. Carey and His Wife Receive National Red Cross Awards

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Office of University  
Communications

November 21, 2019

## *Couple Recognized for Using CPR to Save the Life of A.J.'s Father*



Scott Loudermelt, executive director, Blue Ridge Piedmont Chapter, American Red Cross, left, presents awards to GWU 2017 Alumnus, A.J. Carey, and his wife, Deann, for the actions they took to save A.J.'s father, Bob Carey, who went into cardiac arrest.

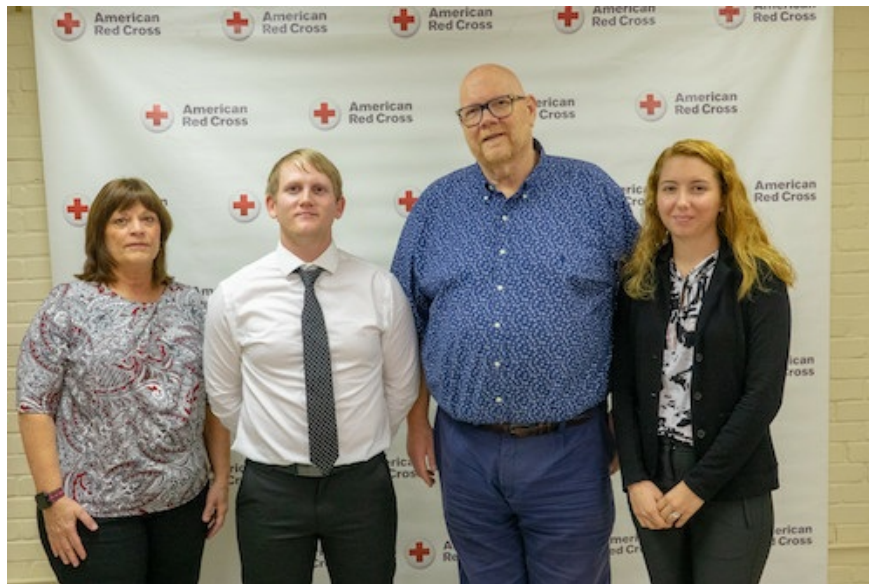
BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—In his last semester at Gardner-Webb University, A.J. Carey took a CPR instructor course, on the recommendation of a professor. Two years later, on Jan. 13, 2019, A.J. would use those skills to save his father's life. A.J.'s wife, Deann, who is a CNA II, helped him perform the lifesaving technique.

For their actions on that day, A.J. and Deann, recently received awards from the American Red Cross. They were nominated for the awards by the GWU professor who taught A.J.'s CPR class, Dr. Debbi Ware, coordinator of the sport education graduate program. A.J., who received a bachelor's degree in sport pedagogy from GWU in 2017, was presented the National Certificate of Merit, and Deann received a Certificate of Extraordinary Personal Action. Caroline Fountain, communications director for the Greater Carolinas Region of the Red Cross, explained that the Certificate of Merit is presented to individuals who have Red Cross training, while the Certificate of Extraordinary Personal Action is for those who were trained by another organization. Since 2018, the Red Cross has recognized 500

individuals worldwide with these awards, she said.

Upon receiving the award, A.J. noted, “I’m a certified CPR instructor, but that was the first time I have ever given any kind of chest compressions—and to be to my dad was pretty crazy. That’s why I recommend everybody get certified. You never know when you may use it. My wife, on the other hand, has used it many times being in the medical field.”

A.J.’s dad, Bob, also works at Gardner-Webb as a professor and chair of the Department of Communication Studies and New Media. When Bob experienced his heart attack, the family was at home. A.J. and Deann, who travel the nation as professional disc golfers, were outside working on their van. When his mom, Sharon, found his dad slumped against a wall, she got A.J. and Deann and called 911. “A.J. laid my husband flat with a pillow under his head, while Deann began CPR,” Sharon recalled. “She did compressions for about four minutes, and then A.J. continued compressions while Deann went outside to help first responders find the house.”



Gardner-Webb Professor Dr. Debbi Ware, left, nominated A.J. Carey for the national award. Posing with her at the award presentation are, A.J., his father, Bob Carey, and his wife, Deann.

The first responders arrived at about nine minutes after the call and there was still no pulse. They continued CPR until paramedics arrived and used a defibrillator three times and compressions until a pulse was detected, about 25 minutes after the call. Then, they transported Bob to the hospital. The family learned from medical professionals that Bob’s chances of a full recovery were slim.

“I don’t remember anything from that day,” related Bob, who has completely recovered. “I just thank God for the fact that my son and daughter-in-law were trained. There’s no doubt in my mind that it was ordained. It was a God thing. I thank the American Red Cross for

the training. Ironically, my father was an American Red Cross Field Director, so I grew up traveling the world.”

*Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.*