



Pictured L-R are: Clarence Woods of Doc-Development, Meyler-McAuliffe's guest Nancy Grabenbauer, Corporal Aidan Meyler-McAuliffe, SgtMaj Michael Brown representing the 20th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Carlos Ruiz, and NCOA Chairman of the Board Robert Barnett.

The 2024 NCOA Marine Corps Vanguard Award, sponsored by Doc-Development, Inc. was presented to Corporal Aidan J. Meyler-McAuliffe in honor and memory of Medal of Honor recipient Corporal Larry L. Maxam, U.S. Marine Corps.

On 23 July 2023, Lance Corporal Meyler-McAuliffe was on board the island head ferry returning from the port of Freeport Marine, Daufuskie Island, where he spends his weekends working a side job as a deckhand. They departed from Freeport Marina at 1700, earlier than usual, to avoid the upcoming storm. At 1800 the storm reached the ferry, and the crew was hit with heavy rain, strong winds, and large waves. Shortly after coming in contact with the storm, the captain of the vessel pointed to some debris in the water and steered the vessel in that direction to see if there were any casualties.

A family's boat had capsized leaving a couple and their two grandchildren in dangerous waters. As the vessel came closer to the debris, it was apparent that there were multiple victims in the water with life jackets on. As the captain was positioning the vessel, LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe began preparing the buoy with a long line attached. There were four victims in the water, three were rescued by another vessel and the fourth was unresponsive. LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe shifted his full attention to the unresponsive woman. Once the three responsive victims were out of danger, the captain attempted to position the ferry closer to the unresponsive woman but was limited by the debris and the storm. LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe attempted to throw the buoy to the woman, but the strong winds were preventing it from going any significant distance. As the woman started to drift away from the vessel, LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe realized that it would take too long for a second attempt to reposition the large ferry to find her. LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe had graduated from the Marine Corps instructor for water survival course exactly 30 days earlier, which gave him the necessary skills to render aid to the drowning victim. Without hesitation LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe put on a life jacket and with the buoy in hand jumped into the six-foot waves towards the woman. As he was making his way towards the victim, his life jacket was ripped off his body by the strong current and waves. Upon reaching the victim LCpl Meyler-

McAuliffe realized that her face was completely purple, and she had a large bruise on her head. He gained control of the hypoxic victim and began swimming her back to the ferry. As they were making their way back to the ferry the victim became conscious, and LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe began assessing her level of consciousness by asking various questions as is required to confirm that the victim does not have any significant brain injury.

Upon arrival at the stem of the ferry, LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe was assisted by several crew mates and he began trying to get the victim on board. LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe while attempting to keep the victims face out of the water was pulled by the current under the vessel four separate times and suffered minor injuries to his foot. Luckily LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe had held onto the buoy rope which prevented him from being sucked in towards the propeller. Once the victim was out of the water, LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe climbed up onto the ferry and began assessing her injuries. Her skin was cold to the touch, she was shivering, and her entire body was purple. It was apparent that the victim was hypoxic and hypothermic. LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe began drying off the victim with towels and covered her with blankets to retain some body heat and used his own body to provide body heat to the victim while he continually assessed her. Upon arrival back to shore, LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe was met by fire/ems, and did a complete debrief and handed the victim off to first responders.

LCpl Meyler-McAuliffe's actions were crucial in saving the life of a grandmother of two. As an additional testament to his commitment, he went to the hospital the next morning to personally check on the woman he had saved.

Corporal Meyler-McAuliffe's initiative, selflessness, and heroic actions reflected credit on himself and the United States Marine Corps.