

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
#21-17

**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HONORS COMMUNITY EMERGENCY
RESPONSE TEAM MEMBERS WHO WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND IN 2016**

On Wednesday, April 26th, in celebration of National Volunteer Week, the New York City Emergency Management Department honored 40 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members who volunteered over 100 hours of service in 2016 with both presidential and mayoral volunteer service awards. CERT members are dedicated volunteers who help to prepare their neighbors and communities for different types of disasters.

“Whether it’s organizing events to prepare their neighbors for emergencies, assisting during large community events, or responding to emergency events throughout the five boroughs, CERT volunteers are an invaluable resource for their neighborhoods,” **said NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**. “Those being honored today are the best of the best, individuals who time and again go above and beyond to serve their communities.”

Among those honored Wednesday were William Vitale and Sal D’Alessio from the Brooklyn 10/11 CERT team, which serves the Bay Ridge and Bensonhurst neighborhoods. Vitale, who is the Deputy Chief of the 10/11 team, has been a CERT member for 12 years. D’Alessio has been a member for seven years.

“We’re giving back to the community – that’s why Sal and I joined,” **said William Vitale**. “We do preparedness talks, exercises, working with our neighbors – there’s a sense of giving back and that’s why we do it. We enjoy working in our neighborhood and getting out to help other communities whenever possible.”

In their years of service together, Sal and William have volunteered driving truckloads of food to the Rockaways and surveying thousands of damaged homes on Staten Island after Hurricane Sandy, escorting displaced residents to and from their homes following the East Village gas explosion, and assisting first responders in the search for missing Queens student Avonte Oquendo.

Sal D’Alessio also serves on his local Brooklyn Community Board 11 as a board member and volunteers at his local police precinct 62 as the Sergeant-at-Arms. “I have a very understanding wife,” **said Sal D’Alessio**. “None of us could do what we do without the support of our wives and loved ones.”

During 2016, D’Alessio and Vitale both logged over 100 volunteer hours by assisting the Bay Ridge/Bensonhurst community during large scale events such as the NYC Marathon, the Five Borough Bike Tour, the Memorial Day Parade in Bay Ridge, The Columbus Day Parade on 18th Avenue, the Run For The Fallen, various holiday processions and events, along with preparedness events they organize throughout the year to help their neighbors prepare for emergencies.

A total of seven Brooklyn-based CERT members were recognized for their service at Wednesday's first annual event in recognition of volunteers who go above and beyond in serving their communities.

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. There are currently more than 1,300 credentialed CERT volunteers representing more than 50 teams throughout New York City.

For more information about the CERT program, or if you are interested in becoming a CERT volunteer, call 311 or visit NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement

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CAPTIONS:

NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito and NYC Service's Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin honor Brooklyn Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members who served over 100 hours in 2016. *From left:* Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin, Lewis Igelhart, Glenn Wolin, Sal D'Alessio, William Vitale, Eric Hebert, Nancy Walby, Commissioner Joseph Esposito.

NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito and NYC Service's Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin honor Brooklyn 10/11 CERT Deputy Chief William Vitale. Vitale spent over 100 hours in 2016 serving the Bensonhurst and Bay Ridge communities. *From left:* Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin, William Vitale, Commissioner Joseph Esposito.

NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito and NYC Service's Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin honor Brooklyn 10/11 CERT member Sal D'Alessio. D'Alessio spent over 100 hours in 2016 serving the Bensonhurst and Bay Ridge communities. *From left:* Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin, Sal D'Alessio, Commissioner Joseph Esposito.

MEDIA CONTACT: Nancy Silvestri/Justin Bennett (718) 422-4888

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