

'A TRUE HERO': EMT Todd Zobrist is recognized for life-saving efforts, despite great danger

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HIGHLAND - A hero (masculine) or heroine (feminine) in literature is a person who in the face of danger, combats adversity through impressive feats of ingenuity, bravery or strength, often sacrificing his or her own personal concerns for some greater good.

Madison County Sheriff John Lakin described **Todd Zobrist**, a paramedic with Highland EMS, on Thursday at a press conference at the department unequivocally as “a hero.”

The Highland EMS paramedic was first to arrive on the scene after a call of a vehicle in Highland's Silver Lake with a person possibly inside. When Zobrist arrived, he found the described vehicle to be partially submerged in the lake, approximately 50 to 75 feet from the shore. In 45-degree water temperatures, Zobrist, a paramedic with Highland EMS, removed what clothing he could and plunged head first into the lake to search the vehicle for occupants.

Zobrist located an unresponsive infant male child in the passenger compartment of the vehicle. The paramedic pulled the lifeless child from the vehicle and immediately began administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), on the roof of the partially submerged vehicle.

The infant was revived at the scene by the paramedic and is now being cared for in a St. Louis area hospital. He is stable and expected to make a complete recovery, Lakin said.

Cristy Campbell, 32, of Glen Carbon, was earlier identified as a “person of interest, possibly endangered” by Madison County Sheriff’s Department after missing after the fire. The body of a woman was found matching her description in Silver Lake in the water a short way from the young child, but the Madison County Coroner’s Office has not positively identified her yet. The body was located near the dam approximately 400 feet from the area where the vehicle entered the water.

“Todd Zobrist was able to shed most of his clothes and get into 45-degree water temperatures, then swam out 50-75 feet into the water and was able to do a full sweep inside the vehicle of seated areas and find a 3-month old floating in a vehicle full of water,” Sheriff Lakin said. “The vehicle only had six to eight inches of air space above where the infant was found. Zobrist was able to remove the baby from the vehicle and get the child to safety on the roof of the vehicle where he began CPR.

“I am very happy to report today that we are getting reports from a hospital in St. Louis that the child is fine and is supposed to be released tomorrow. If there's something good that came of all this tragedy in my opinion is that (EMT) Todd Zobrist is a hero and the family of the 3-month-old will be able to spend a long time with this child because of Mr. Zobrist.”

Zobrist’s supervisor, Highland EMS Chief Brian Wilson completely echoed Sheriff Lakin’s sentiments and said: “Right now, Todd is trying to keep warm, obviously. He, without question, exhibited bravery beyond what you would expect when he arrived on

the scene and jumped bravely into the water without hesitation and was able to sweep the vehicle, retrieve the infant and begin CPR on the hood of the vehicle while waiting for help. He swam back to shore with the infant and still initiated CPR and by the time they reached the hospital, the child was breathing and had a pulse.

“Whenever anybody in Highland today heard that a paramedic jumped into the water, they knew Todd was the one. He definitely saved the child’s life and put his own life at risk. Todd was born in 1985 from what I remember and has been with the department for five years. We are extremely proud of him.”

Sheriff Lakin closed his eyes, paused, then opened his eyes and said the most profound statement of the day at the press conference: “I think again, EMT Todd Zobrist deserves a great deal of credit, he is a hero in my opinion.”