



**For Immediate Release**  
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Contact: Fiona Phelan  
Manager, Communications and Public Relations  
(203) 294-7206  
[Phelan@chime.org](mailto:Phelan@chime.org)

## **CHA to Recognize Greenwich Hospital's Meli Rokocaba as a Healthcare Hero**

WALLINGFORD – At its 101st Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 20, 2019, the Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) will recognize Meli Rokocaba, Security Officer, Greenwich Hospital, as a 2019 Healthcare Hero. He was nominated by Debi D'Alba for this award.

As a security officer, Mr. Rokocaba is charged with keeping patients, staff, and visitors at Greenwich Hospital safe. But on a stormy day last September that would bring heavy rainstorms and widespread flash flooding across Connecticut, with as much as 5 to 9 inches of rain falling during a three- to four-hour period, Mr. Rokocaba's attention turned to the safety and well-being of his community with a courageous act that left one elderly couple extremely grateful.

During Mr. Rokocaba's drive home from Greenwich Hospital to Fairfield, a busy intersection at an underpass quickly started flooding. Due to the high volume of traffic, many people were forced to abandon their cars to get to safety. The water was rising quickly, and while onlookers grabbed their smart phones to record what was happening, Mr. Rokocaba jumped into action when he noticed that the passengers in one car taking in water weren't getting out of the vehicle.

When he ran toward the stalled car, Mr. Rokocaba found an elderly couple. He quickly learned why they were still in the car. The gentleman was paralyzed and his wife was unable to reach his wheelchair in the trunk. Urging the couple to remain calm, Mr. Rokocaba opened the car door to find water already covering the couple's ankles. Using his training in the British infantry, where he had tours of duty in Afghanistan and Iraq, Mr. Rokocaba swiftly and safely guided the wife out of the car and up the hill to another willing passerby.

Mr. Rokocaba then returned to assist the husband, where the water level in the car had now reached the seats. He carried the man to the top of the hill where emergency medical service providers had arrived at the scene. By the time Mr. Rokocaba returned to the couple's vehicle to retrieve the wheelchair, the car was almost completely flooded.

The crowd at the scene was in awe as the couple expressed their gratitude. Mr. Rokocaba didn't understand what the fuss was all about.

"To me, this was nothing," he said. "I see someone in trouble, I help. That's what I do."

CHA's Healthcare Heroes award was developed in 2002 to celebrate the invaluable contributions of healthcare workers, both to their field and to the community at large. Now in its 17th year, the presentation of the Healthcare Heroes awards has become a highlight of CHA's Annual Meeting.



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### **About CHA**

The Connecticut Hospital Association has been dedicated to serving Connecticut's hospitals and health systems since 1919. Through state and federal advocacy, CHA represents the interests of Connecticut's hospitals and health systems on key healthcare issues in the areas of quality and patient safety, access and coverage, workforce, community health, health equity, and hospital reimbursement.