Community

Fort Montgomery EMTs receive Meritorious Award

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HIGHLAND FALLS — Marty and Christin Byrnes, EMTs with the Town of Highlands Volunteer Ambulance Corps based in Highland Falls, received the state Volunteer and Rescue Association 2009 EMS Meritorious Award at an awards dinner in Albany recently.

The award was "in recognition of their valiant life-saving efforts and willingness to place themselves in an unavoidable position of risk" during the efforts to rescue a 16-year-old girl who fell from a cliff at Hell Hole in Bear Mountain State Park on July 20, 2008.

Although not on duty at the time, Marty and Christin Byrnes heard the call at their home in nearby Fort Montgomery and responded to Hell Hole. Carrying their equipment, they climbed down the cliff. At the very bottom of Hell Hole, they found Kelly Cortesi, 16, of Putnam Valley, critically injured from a 40-foot fall. Marty and Christin then took over care from the police officers who were also at the scene. Both EMTs worked on the girl and were able to revive her. Cortesi was then carefully immobilized and turned over to the Fort Montgomery Fire Department Mountain Rescue Team, which then was able to get her out.

The patient was airlifted to Westchester Medical Center, but died of her injuries several days later.