



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE GOLD LIFESAVING MEDAL  
TO**

**CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER JAMES D. METZA  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

For extreme and heroic daring on the afternoon of 27 February 2005, when Chief Warrant Officer METZA rescued his brother from the freezing waters of the Chippewa River. Chief Warrant Officer METZA was off-duty and with his brother, David Metza, on a snowmobile ride from Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, heading north to Cornell, Wisconsin. While crossing a frozen river, David's snowmobile broke through the ice into the frigid waters. Chief Warrant Officer METZA first attempted to rescue David by lying down on the ice and having David swim to him. Unfortunately, David was 75 yards away and unable to close the distance. Unable to safely and directly reach his brother, he tried to go down river on his snowmobile and come up from the other side. During the maneuvering he also broke through the ice into the freezing river. Now in a life or death struggle himself, Chief Warrant Officer METZA called upon his Rescue Survival Training to overcome conditions that would incapacitate most individuals. After 30 grueling minutes, he managed to crawl back onto the ice losing his boots in the process. Unrelentingly, he returned to rescuing his stranded brother, regardless of the life threatening danger they now both faced. During this renewed effort, he broke through the ice and freed himself several more times, all the while never succumbing to unimaginable physical and mental trauma. Finally reaching his brother, he found himself unable to extract David from the water. Despite suffering from shock, exposure and hypothermia, Chief Warrant Officer METZA made his way through the woods to a nearby house to call for help. After asking the homeowner to call 9-1-1, Chief Warrant Officer METZA returned to the river. During subsequent attempts, battling excruciating pain, disabling cold, exhaustion, extreme exposure and hypothermia, he was miraculously able to pull his brother out of the freezing water to safety. Chief Warrant Officer METZA and David were both taken to the hospital and treated for extreme exposure and severe hypothermia. His unselfish actions and valiant service, despite imminent personal danger, reflect great credit upon himself and are in keeping with the highest traditions of humanitarian service.