

# Kunkels recognize heroic couple

Civic Association honors Raper family for their efforts that helped victims of cabin-cruiser fire.

By **WILLIAM KELLY**

*Daily News Staff Writer*

On the morning of June 30, Palm Beach police responded to reports of a burning vessel in the waters between the Florida Power & Light power plant and the Sailfish Club in the North End.

The police boat Marine One arrived to find a 35-foot cabin cruiser engulfed in flames following an explosion. Two men were in the water clinging to another vessel that had come to their rescue.

The rescue vessel belonged to a West Palm Beach couple, Bill and Betsy Raper, who were spending the day with their grandchildren. The Rapers saw the explosion, then raced to the scene to find one victim in the water, and the other on the burning vessel. They got the man off the vessel and helped him into the water, and kept both afloat until police arrived.

One of the victims later died from severe burns to his body, but the other survived after being treated at St. Mary's Regional Medical Center.

On Monday, the Rapers and their grandchildren, Brooke Richardson and Thomas Richardson, were at the Palm Beach Civic Association's annual meeting to receive a Kunkel Award from the Raymond J. Kunkel Foundation. They also were given a check for \$2,000.

The award is given in recognition of the late Civic Association chairman to honor individuals or groups for heroic or meritorious service to the town.

Other recipients of this year's Kunkel awards included Leslie Evans, an attorney and businessman, who was recognized for his leadership in the campaign to help renovate the historic Paramount theater building



**Above:** Brooke Richardson, 6, plays with her grandparents' Kunkel Award during the ceremony on Monday. Bill and Betsy Raper received the award for their rescue of victims of a boating disaster.

**Right:** Foundation member William Matthews, left, hands the Kunkel Award to Felix Baptiste. Baptiste was one of two Scott Lewis employees who helped catch a suspected thief.

*Daily News Photos  
by Chris Salata*



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# KUNKEL

## Evans gains honors for Paramount Church efforts, landscapers for reporting theft

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on North County Road.

Last August, the church faced daily code enforcement fines for failing to maintain a town landmark. It was unable to raise the \$300,000 needed to replace the building's roof and railings.

Evans suggested to Pastor Dwight Stevens of the Paramount Church, which owns the building, that the church seek a loan instead of trying to raise the money through donations. Evans arranged meetings with town residents, including Town Council President David Rosow. They put the word out, which led to a loan offer for the full renovation cost from Civic Association Director John Scarpa, and his wife, Jana.

In Evans' honor, the Kunkel Foundation gave a check for \$1,000 to the church's renovation fund.

Kunkel Awards also were given to landscapers Yvonne Beroud and Felix Baptiste, for reporting a theft, and to Public Safety Director Kirk Blouin on behalf of Palm Beach's Mobile Eyes public safety program.

Beroud and Baptiste are Scott Lewis Landscaping employees trained in the Mobile Eyes program, a police and public works partnership for outdoor workers.

On Sept. 27, Beroud and Baptiste spotted someone stealing lawn equipment valued at \$1,500 from one of the company's trucks in town. They contacted police, then got into their vehicles and followed the suspect until police could join in.



Daily News Photo by Chris Salata

Stanley M. Rumbough Jr., left, president of the Raymond J. Kunkel Foundation, hands the Kunkel Award to Leslie Evans, resident, local attorney and businessman, for his leadership in the campaign to help renovate the historic Paramount theaters building on North County Road.

When police arrived, a chase ensued, with the suspect heading south on County Road, and then hitting two cars and a truck on Royal Poinciana Way. He raced across the Flagler Memorial Bridge and was eventually caught hiding in bushes in West Palm Beach.

The Kunkel Foundation gave checks for \$1,000 to both Beroud and Baptiste, and also contributed \$1,000 to Mobile Eyes.

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