
Life saving medallion: Icons or relics?

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This presentation will provide delegates with an insight to the impact of the lifesaving bronze medallion throughout the lifesaving regions of the world. Since ancient Roman times the presentation of medals (or medallions) have been presented to individuals to commemorate or recognise achievements of note, be it in the conflict between nations, religious occasion, competition or commemorating some other event.

Throughout history there are 'enough medals to cover just about every subject, no matter how broad, or how narrow' (Johnson 2010). Any topic you choose ranging from aviation, music, space, Olympics, religion, military conflict/service, fire fighters, paramedics and of specific interest – lifesaving.

In lifesaving many organisations have included recognition of achievement by individuals through the awarding of a medallion of some description – many adopting the Bronze Medallion as an indicator of an individual's status within the organisation in achieving a benchmark qualification.

This provides the community with some assurance that any trained lifesaver on-duty meets the standard expected in terms of fitness, knowledge, technology and techniques that can be utilised in the case of an aquatic emergency. Beyond this application people have a genuine interest in earning and displaying medals not only because of the inherent value and recognition derived from the source, but also from the inherent characteristics of medals.

Characteristics such as:

- Accuracy – in the detail
- Bilateral – janus like with two sides
- Permanence – resilient in the material
- Intimacy – due to size and personal focus
- Narration – the picture depicts a story
- Perspective charm – art in miniature
- Commemoration – the celebration of achievement
- Image – status, image
- Beauty – artistic
- Longevity – long lasting memento

Then again is the attraction merely because they are miniature works of art that can be held in the hand?

This display will highlight the characteristics of the specific artefact as well as provide some insight into the history that is part and parcel of the lifesaving organisations that they represent.

References

1. Johnson, D.Wayne 2010, Medal Collectors of America, <http://www.medalcollectors.org/Guides/index.html>

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