

05-21-2011 – Macon GA – Michael Dewayne Jones – FF Attempted Rescue**In Memory Of Michael Dewayne Jones: A Real Hero**

<http://macon.13wmaz.com/news/community-spirit/memory-michael-dewayne-jonesa-real-hero/53003>

May 22nd, 2011 Submitted by Rachon Ward, Community Buzz Line



Firehouse in mourning

I'm saddened today as I look across the street at the flag flying at half-mast. As it billows in the gentle breeze I think of the hero who is mourned at every firehouse in the community.

Michael Dewayne Jones, a 24-year-old Macon-Bibb County firefighter gave his life last night to save three children whose ages are 5, 7 and 8. They were swimming in deep water and needed help.

Several people went to their rescue. Firefighter Jones drowned during the rescue. I honor him today as a hero. He is gone, but his actions will never be forgotten. Thank you Michael. [See 13WMAZ's coverage.](#)

Ga. man drowns while rescuing 3 children in lake

http://www.wrdw.com/home/headlines/Ga_man_drowns_while_rescuing_3_children_in_lake_122425324.html

May 22, 2011 *By Associated Press* |

MACON, Ga. -- Authorities say a 24-year-old man drowned in Lake Tobesofkee outside of Macon while trying to save three children.

Bibb County Coroner Leon Jones says the body of Michael Dewayne Jones was pulled from the lake Saturday about an hour after he disappeared. The coroner is not related to the victim.

Leon Jones says the man was rescuing children ages 5, 7 and 8 who were having trouble swimming. Leon Jones says the children were saved but Michael Jones drowned.

Authorities say the children did not belong to Michael Jones.

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<http://www.walb.com/story/14693211/ga-man-drowns-while-rescuing-3-children-in-lake>

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Georgia Firefighter Dies While Saving Drowning Children

<http://www.firefighternation.com/articles/2011/05/georgia-firefighter-dies-while-saving-drowning-children.html>

05/23/2011



**Michael Jones and his wife, Tykia
Richmond. (WMAZ/11Alive)**

MACON, Ga. (11Alive) - A Central Georgia family and a brotherhood of firefighters are mourning the loss of a 24-year-old who died while rescuing three children from a lake over the weekend.

Macon-Bibb County firefighter Michael Dewayne Jones drowned at Lake Tobesofkee Saturday evening.

Jones jumped into the lake to rescue his sons, 5-year-old Joshua and 7-year-old Jarell, as well as a little girl who was also playing in the water.

"The little girl started drowning," said Michael's sister Tiffany Jones. "He saved her. My nephew started drowning; he saved him. My other nephew started to drown and somehow my other nephew got back in the water and started to drown."

Michael's widow, Tykia, said she left her family at the lake and made a quick trip to a nearby convenience store. When she left, everything was calm, the kids were OK and Michael had their 7-month-old strapped to his chest. When she returned less than 10 minutes later, there was a bystander holding her baby, the kids were all wet and Michael was in the water.

Macon-Bibb County Fire Chief Marvin Riggins said Michael had been with the fire

department for a week, but he was already part of the firefighter brotherhood.

"It's gonna be tough for his training group because they learn to bond and grow together, so it's gonna be tough," Riggins said. "Our hearts are heavy for the family and for the department itself."

As the family struggles with the loss, Tiffany said she still can't believe their hero is gone.

"It was like shock. Like, I know he's gonna come up out of that water, I know he's gonna walk around here trying to find us." (WMAZ Macon)

Firefighter drowns while rescuing 3 kids in lake

<http://thegrio.com/2011/05/23/firefighter-drowns-while-rescuing-3-kids-in-lake/05-23-2011> by the Grio

24-year-old Central Georgia firefighter Michael Dewayne Jones died while rescuing three children. Jones drowned at Lake Tobesofkee while saving his two sons, 5-year-old Joshua and 7-year-old Jarell and a little girl who was also playing in the water.

"The little girl started drowning," said Michael's sister Tiffany Jones. "He saved her. My nephew started drowning; he saved him. My other nephew started to drown and somehow my other nephew got back in the water and started to drown."

His wife Tykia Richmond left the family at the lake for a run at a convenient store.

She returned to her husband in the water and bystanders holding her children. According to Marvin Riggins, Macon-Bibb County Fire Chief, Michael had been with the fire department for just a week.

"It's gonna be tough for his training group because they learn to bond and grow together, so it's gonna be tough," Riggins said. "Our hearts are heavy for the family and for the department itself."

'What any parent's gonna do'

[HTTP://WWW.MACON.COM/NEWS/ARTICLE28610485.HTML](http://www.macon.com/news/article28610485.html)

MAY 23, 2011 By JOE KOVAC JR. - jkovac@macon.com

It was the young father's first fishing trip. And as side-of-the-road fishing holes go, the one out off Mosley Dixon Road, just down the cove from a fish house where Oprah Winfrey once ate, is about as family-friendly as they come.

There's a gravel parking patch beneath the pines. There aren't many weeds. The dirt bank doesn't boast enough sand to really call it a beach, but for getting your feet wet or bank fishing it's perfect. Folks often pull in to feed bread to the ducks and geese who call Lake Tobesofkee home.

Saturday afternoon, Mike Jones, a 24-year-old who was only days into a 16-week training regimen to become a Macon firefighter, went to the lake with his wife and three sons.

Jones had grown up in the city's Pleasant Hill neighborhood, on fourth Avenue, a block south of Walnut Street and just west of Interstate 75. He taught his younger sister, Tiffany, to tie her shoes, to ride her bicycle. One time, Tiffany, who was just learning to ride, steered clear of a bus, into a curb, thanks to her big brother's lessons.

"He was always the hero," Tiffany, 22, would say. "If he saw you on the side of the road he was gonna stop and help you."

For much of the past six years, he worked at Lowe's to help put his wife, Tykia, through nursing school.

Then Saturday, Tykia introduced him to her fishing spot.

Pretty much every week, she'd go there by herself or with their boys -- 7-year-old Jarell, 5-year-old Joshua and 7-month-old Justin. Now Mike, in long pants, a T-shirt and Polo boots, joined them to take in the outdoors. It was his first time handling a pole and, for bait, red wigglers.

Sometime after 6 p.m., Tykia drove to a store for drinks.

When she got back, her husband was dead.

* * *

The fishing spot sits about two miles west of Interstate 475. From town, you take Thomaston Road out over the freeway to Mosley Dixon and hang a left.

The spot is down about a mile or so on the left, just past a tiny bridge that crosses Tobesofkee's northeastern tip.

The Fish N' Pig restaurant lies a few hundred yards further west, next to a marina below the lake's main entrance.

When Mike's wife returned to the family outing Saturday evening, it was after 6:45, after people had called 911, after Mike had gone underwater and not come up. In the moments before that, as best investigators can tell, Mike had rushed into the lake, not far from shore, to help one of his sons who was being tugged under by an 8-year-old girl they had met there and begun playing with.

Mike had been carrying his 7-month-old son Justin in a harness around his chest. So Mike unstrapped Justin, left him on the bank and raced into the water, Bibb County sheriff's Lt. Paul Edwards said Sunday.

The two older boys, Edwards says, had been splashing in the water with the 8-year-old girl. Then, when Mike noticed the girl thrashing, struggling and grabbing onto one of his sons, he dashed in to save them.

"He jumps in and grabs the girl, basically throwing her to the (bank)," Edwards said, noting that eyewitness accounts were still being pieced together and that investigators had yet to talk to the 8-year-old girl's family.

Mike then shoved one of his two older sons ashore. That left one son, 7-year-old Jarell who'd drifted further out, still in need of rescue.

"(Mike) goes out and gets him and starts pushing him in (to safety)," Edwards said, adding that all of the commotion happened within 10-to-15 yards of shore.

"So they get closer to shore and a lady reaches to grab Mike's hand ... and he slips, maybe on a rock."

Edwards said, "He did what any parent's gonna do. He did what firemen are trained to do. But for whatever reason, he slipped. It could've been a catfish hole, it could've been a rock. He went down and he never came back up."

* * *

It had been Mike's dream to become a firefighter.

He'd gone to his childhood-neighborhood school, Williams Elementary, and, later, Central High, before joining the Job Corps and graduating as an electrician's apprentice.

He was working at Lowe's when he first applied at the fire department in 2007.

After that, he kept checking back for openings. He had just begun fire department orientation last week.

"The only reason he got on was because he was persistent," Tykia said. "That's all he talked about, every time he would see a fire truck. He just said he liked saving people. Anybody that knows Mike knows that he loves you to death. ... I can say something horrible or do something horrible and he's gonna still be there for me."

Mike was a fan of NFL quarterback Peyton Manning and the Indianapolis Colts.

Tykia, 27, who can't stand football, would say she loved Tom Brady just to pick at Mike.

For fun, they and their kids would go swimming. Sometimes they'd check into hotels just to use the pools.

Mike loved going out to dinner. His new favorite thing was the chicken alfredo at Olive Garden.

Mike would have turned 25 on July 6.

* * *

People prayed at the lakeside Saturday as the sun went down. Boaters looked on across the water.

In the minutes before Mike's body was found, family members could be heard saying things like, "Please, Lord, don't let it happen."

"He's gonna swim up," a man kept saying. "He's gonna swim up."
But Michael Dewayne Jones Jr. never did.

About 8 o'clock, rescuers spotted him, drowned, not far from shore.

It was, in the end, the firefighters -- the very people he would no doubt have worked with, the first-responders he had dreamed of being part of -- who pulled him ashore.

Mike had told his wife he didn't want his boys growing up with a father who just sat on the corner all day and did nothing.

So every time Mike saw firefighters at Lowe's, he'd be all over them, asking them about landing a job.

Mike couldn't have known how his final act as a man would play out.

Still, he'd always told his wife that when he died, he wanted his sons to remember him as a professional life-saver, a firefighter, a daddy who made it his life's work to help others.

"I guess he's gonna get that wish," Tykia said. "He wanted them to be proud of him."