

# Tsunami Heroes and Heroines

## Tilly Smith

On December 26, 2004, Tilly Smith was a 10 year-old British school girl on holiday in Phuket Thailand with her family. She observed the ocean suddenly changing in character and, having studied about tsunamis two week previously in her geography class, thought it looked like the video she had seen about the 1946 tsunami in Hawaii. She told her parents she thought a tsunami was coming, they told other people on the beach to evacuate and the hotel manager (from Japan) told everyone to go to the upper floors of buildings. She is credited with saving the lives of 100 people.



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tilly\\_Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tilly_Smith)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0yrONL1Q3g>

## Tsunami Heroine: Abby Wutzler

Abby Wutzler, from Wellington New Zealand, was vacationing in Samoa on September 29, 2009 when she noticed the ocean was withdrawing. She had been taught about the natural warning signs of a tsunami in school and ran up and down the beach yelling that a tsunami was coming. "I remember looking under my arms and seeing all these trees just crushing and being crushed in the brown water, just swirling around and killing everything in sight," she recounted. Many other tourists credit Abby's warning with saving their lives. For her life-saving efforts, she was presented with a certificate of commendation by New Zealand's Ministry of Civil Defense.



Who is the heroine in this group?  
The smallest one of course!

<http://english.cctv.com/program/newshour/20091015/103172.shtml>

## Tsunami Heroine: Martina Marturana

In the early morning hours of February 27, 2010, Martina Marturana felt a slight tremor that lasted a long time. The 12-year-old who lived on Robinson Crusoe Island, 325 miles off the coast of central Chile, was concerned about the earthquake and told her father. They called her uncle who lived in Northern Chile who told them a massive earthquake had just occurred. She looked out the window and noticed the boats in the harbor moving in an unusual way, and ran to ring an alarm bell in the town square. Eight people died in her village but she is credited with saving over 600!



<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/how-12yearold-girl-saved-her-chilean-island-from-catastrophe-1915821.html>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKpokUT7zfc>

## Aveao Faausu Fonoti, Mayor of Amanave

Aveao shows the bullhorn he used on the morning of September 29, 2009 to notify the residents of his village of Amanave on the island of Tutuilla in American Samoa. He had attended a workshop sponsored by the Samoan Affairs Office for mayors about tsunamis only a few weeks beforehand and remembered that ground shaking was a natural warning. He ran through the village blowing the bullhorn and alerting residents to the danger. Some people tried to ignore him but he was insistent. Although 80% of the buildings in his village were destroyed, no one died and no one was seriously injured.



<http://www.talanei.com/2010/02/amanave-mayor-receives-award-for.html>  
<http://www.samoanews.com/viewstory.php?storyid=12748>



## Moisés Molina, Iloca Policeman

Moisés Molina was on duty in the Chilean coastal resort town of Iloca when the ground started shaking in the early morning hours of February 27, 2010. He was not from the coast and had not learned about ground shaking as a natural warning sign of a tsunami. But he had seen the tsunami evacuation signs posted in the town and when he saw the ocean change character, he realized it was time to evacuate. He coordinated his police staff and successfully notified everyone, including unsuspecting campers, to evacuate. Thanks to his efforts, no one in Iloca died.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwbWa0xIPgc>

[www.eqclearinghouse.org/...chile/.../dengler\\_itst\\_hsu\\_preliminary\\_team\\_report1.pdf](http://www.eqclearinghouse.org/...chile/.../dengler_itst_hsu_preliminary_team_report1.pdf)

## Mauro Mosciatti, Director Radio Bio Bio,

Mauro Mosciatti was the Director of Radio Bio Bio, a commercial radio station in Concepción, Chile. He was trained as an engineer and concerned that a large earthquake could damage his radio station. He decided to get ready, checking the strength of the building, getting generators and supplies and making sure nothing would fall down. His actions paid off. The magnitude 8.7 February 27, 2010 Chile earthquake caused no damage to the studio and they were back on the air 20 minutes later. For four days, they were the only ones broadcasting – relaying what information they could gather, and helping people find shelters, medical supplies and locate missing friends and family. It turned out to be a good business plan too – Radio Bio Bio became national heroes and their listening audience more than doubled in the wake of the disaster.



<https://dartcenter.org/content/it-has-to-be-radio-community-broadcasters-respond-to-chile-quake>

# Tsunami Heroes and Heroines: the students of Unosumai School

In Kamaishi, an Elementary and Junior High School were located just outside of the mapped tsunami hazard zone. The standard procedure was to evacuate to the third floor of the school if a strong earthquake was felt or a tsunami warning was issued.

But the Junior High students were part of a special hazards education program and had been taught to:

- Evaluate the situation themselves
- Do as much as you can to make yourself safe
- Take the lead in evacuation

After the earthquake, the Junior High students immediately headed inland to high ground. Elementary school students next door saw them and followed. The older students helped the younger ones get to a safe area and no one died even though both schools were completely destroyed.



*The elementary and middle school children practiced evacuation drills (top). On March 11, 2011, they knew exactly what to do ((bottom).*

[http://www.japanfs.org/en/news/archives/news\\_id034287.html](http://www.japanfs.org/en/news/archives/news_id034287.html)