

Technical Sergeant John E. Giovannini distinguished himself by extraordinary bravery and personal sacrifice in saving the life of another.

On 13 September 1999, Technical Sergeant John E. Giovannini was enjoying a reunion of family and friends on the ocean beaches of Ocean City, Maryland. The calm and joy of that occasion was shattered by the desperate cries for help from a 22-year-old mother of two. The woman was caught in a strong rip tide that was carrying her out to sea. Her cries for help caught the attention of Sergeant Giovannini. As no lifeguards were in the immediate area, and sensing a desperate situation, he voluntarily chose to enter the ocean to assist the woman. Without regard to his own safety, and with no formal aquatic lifesaving training, Sergeant Giovannini swam to the woman and began pulling her to shore. Before reaching the safety of shore, witnesses noted that he was obviously becoming physically exhausted himself, but he refused to leave the woman he was assisting. When he was unable to swim any further, he fought to maintain his position, and kept the woman above water, while calling for additional help from shore. Two others then swam to assist in finishing the rescue. Upon reaching shore, Sergeant Giovannini lost consciousness. Shortly after, professional rescue personnel arrived, but were unable to revive Sergeant Giovannini. He died in route to a hospital. Eyewitness accounts of passers-by and emergency personnel confirm that were it not for the heroic effort of Sergeant Giovannini, the young woman would have been swept out to sea and drowned.

Technical Sergeant Giovannini's courageous actions, at great personal risk and sacrifice, reflect the highest traditions of service. He risked, and gave, his life so that another might live. The exemplary courage and heroism displayed by Technical Sergeant John E. Giovannini reflect great credit upon himself, the Pennsylvania Air National Guard and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and truly warrant his induction into the Pennsylvania Air National Guard Hall of Fame.