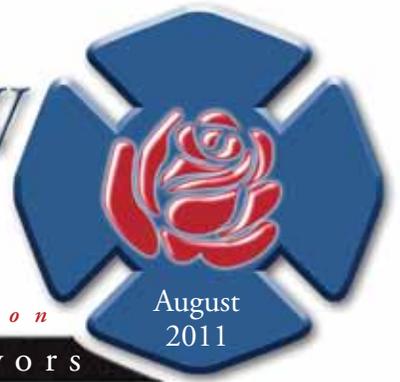


# FACING TOMORROW TOGETHER

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation  
A Newsletter for Fire Service Survivors



The 30th annual National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend will be held at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, on

October 14-16, 2011. During this special weekend, 72 firefighters who died in the line of duty in 2010 and 17 who died in previous years will be honored. Their names will be added to bronze plaques surrounding the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial, which list the names of more than 3,500 firefighters who have died in the line of duty since the Memorial was established in 1981.



If a family member, friend, or member of your department is being honored this year, we hope you will be able to attend this special event. We also welcome anyone who has previously had a firefighter honored at the National Memorial. "Returning survivors" can reconnect with friends and support families who are attending the Weekend for the first time.

If you have not responded or registered for the Memorial Weekend yet, you can still attend. Please contact us or visit [Weekend.FireHero.org](http://Weekend.FireHero.org) for more information and to register for this very special event. ■

## ONE MORE YEAR, ONE MORE TEAR

By Jo Ann Tilton, wife of Gary Tilton (2004-TX) *(Written after the 2010 Memorial Weekend)*



As the harvest moon rose into the October sky, the tears began to fall. Just like the harvest moon, they come around every fall.

Each year I tell myself that this year there will be no tears. After all, it has been six years since my hero died. Surely in six years I had cried all the tears one could cry. But, once again, I was wrong. Once again the tears flowed freely as the words of the song "See You in the Morning" pulled at my heart strings just as much as it did the first time I heard it.

One who had not been on the journey of grief would tend to think that there is something terribly wrong with a person who can't seem to "get over it" within what they consider a reasonable length of time. What is that time? For those non-grievors, it can be very short. It can be days, weeks, and if you are lucky, months. Yes, the non-griever doesn't understand that grief is not something you check off your to-do list and move on down the road. Grief is a very personal issue filled with many individual hurts and sorrows. It has been said that the more you loved someone, the more you grieve. The hurt is too deep to go away in a matter of days. Oh, it does get better, but it doesn't go away. Someone once described grief as a surgical scar. Just after

surgery, the scar is new and very painful. As time goes on, the scar begins to heal, but if it is hit just the right way, all that pain comes back. It is the same with grief. Over time it does get better, but the hurt never completely goes away. It has been said that there is comfort in numbers. In grief, there is comfort in numbers of your own kind. No one truly understands like someone who has walked the same path. Only those who have carried the weight of grief on their shoulders can understand how heavy that load can be.

And so, year after year, I come to the Memorial Weekend. I come to honor the lives lost and to offer support to those newest family members. I also come to honor the life and the memory of my firefighter. Each time I see my husband's name on the Memorial, it is as if I am seeing it for the first time. As I attend the ceremonies of the Weekend, I feel humbled and honored to be a part of this family. Family...such a powerful word. It has the power to draw us together with a bond that cannot be denied. Yes, it is true. We draw comfort and strength from one another. We can laugh together, cry together, and just simply have a good time together. And guess what? We all understand!

As the crowd moves on from another Candlelight Service, the tears of honor and sorrow have stopped for now. The scar of grief has healed just a little more tonight. ■



For the first time in the 30-year history of the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service, fire departments across the country can participate in a formal memorial service with their local places of worship to honor those who died in the line of duty.

The NFFF, in cooperation with fire departments nationwide, introduces Bells Across America for Fallen Firefighters, a special remembrance service to honor firefighters who died in the line of duty last year. Bells will ring at places of worship around the country on Sunday, October 16, 2011, the same day the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service is taking place in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

“During the Service, the bells at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel in Emmitsburg will ring to honor the memories of those who made the ultimate sacrifice this past year,” said Chief Ronald J. Siarnicki, executive director of the NFFF. “We are encouraging fire departments across the country to invite their local prayer assemblies to join us in this poignant tribute to our fallen heroes with a prayer and ringing of the bells during their own services.”

The tolling of bells holds special meaning for firefighters. The sound of the station bell signified the beginning of a

shift, a call for help, and the return to the station once a fire was extinguished. A series of bells was customarily rung to notify department members that a comrade had died in the line of duty. This time-honored tradition is still used today during funerals and memorial services for firefighters.

To help support this grassroots effort, the Foundation has materials



for fire departments to use to contact religious organizations in their communities. Civic organizations are also encouraged to participate. A response form is also available so that

departments, places of worship, and organizations can inform the NFFF about their own Bells Across America for Fallen Firefighters activities.

For more information about participating in Bells Across America for Fallen Firefighters, visit [www.BellsAcrossAmerica.com](http://www.BellsAcrossAmerica.com). ■

## WALK OF HONOR® UPDATE



With the approaching 10-year anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation is pleased to add a special area in the Memorial Park to pay tribute to the FDNY firefighters who died in the World Trade Center, as well as to the other 776 FDNY firefighters who gave their lives in the line of duty since 1865. The *To Lift a Nation* sculpture will be at the center of the first phase of development. Bricks honoring the fallen heroes will fill the walkway in front of the sculpture.

The expansion of the Walk of Honor® will be completed in three phases. The first phase includes the installation of a brick sidewalk and U-shaped plaza in front of the *To Lift a Nation* sculpture. Two 18' circular nodes will attach the new section of the walkway with the existing sidewalks. A spotlight will be added, front

and center of sculpture, to illuminate the American flag. Boxwoods and holly will frame

the plaza and sculpture, and a low boxwood hedge will create a natural backdrop behind the sculpture. Phases two and three will replace the concrete sidewalks between the existing Walk of Honor® and the FDNY Plaza.

This special area in the Memorial Park to honor FDNY firefighters is the result of a vision brought to fruition by Vina Drennan, whose husband, Captain John Drennan, died in 1994 after being badly burned fighting a fire in NYC. Ten years after Vina first presented the idea for a special FDNY section in the Walk of Honor®, the dream will become reality. ■



# BETTER ANGELS: THE FIREFIGHTERS OF 9/11

New Memorial and Exhibit Honors the Lives of FDNY Firefighters



awn Siebel sat on her couch in Colorado, staring at the TV in shock on September 11, 2001. Although she did not have a personal connection to any of those who died that day, the sadness she felt as an American and former New Yorker was palpable. Twelve days later, when *The New York Times* published photos of the 343 FDNY firefighters, Siebel, an artist, felt compelled to find a way to honor their sacrifices.

Siebel decided to paint 343 individual monochromatic oil portraits of each firefighter onto charred blocks of wood, 6 inches high x 4 inches wide, with his name and company written beneath. She felt that while the intimate size of each painting depicts the individuals, the collection of the 343 portrays the enormity of the loss.

Inspired by the concluding words of Abraham Lincoln's inaugural address in which he called on the Nation to heal its wounds by appealing to the "better angels of our nature," she titled it *Better Angels: The Firefighters of 9/11*. Siebel states, "For me, these 343 represented New York City, the FDNY, the entire fire service, and the possibility that each of us may rise to be the 'better angels' of our own nature."

In mid-2009, Ms. Siebel met with Chief Ronald J. Siarnicki, executive director of the National Fallen



Firefighters Foundation (NFFF), and other Foundation representatives to discuss her ideas and present her work. A partnership was forged to find a way to bring the exhibit to a venue for firefighters and the public. The Foundation also shared Ms. Siebel's idea with representatives of the Department of Justice (DOJ), which provides Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) to families who have lost a loved one in the line of duty. With support from the DOJ, the exhibit expanded to include information about PSOB as well as the names of all firefighters who are honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Panels were recently added to recognize several firefighters from other fire

departments who responded and died at the World Trade Center on September 11th.

A traveling exhibit, *Better Angels* appeared for the first time at the Maryland State Firemen's Convention in Ocean City, Maryland, in June and at Firehouse Expo in Baltimore in July. A website and blog have been launched to generate interest in the project and to collect stories about these 343 heroes, as well as other firefighters who have made the supreme sacrifice. For more information, visit [www.betterangels911.com](http://www.betterangels911.com). ■

## DAR REMEMBERS 9/11



he National Fallen Firefighters Foundation is the proud recipient of a special commemorative 9/11 flag presented by the Frederick, Maryland, chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). A DAR Chapter in New York designed the flag in honor and remembrance of victims of the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and Flight 93.

A ceremony was held in the historic National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel on August 9. The DAR, founded in 1890 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a non-profit, non-political volunteer women's service



organization dedicated to promoting patriotism, preserving American history, and securing America's future through better education for children. For information about the DAR, please visit their website [www.dar.org](http://www.dar.org) or visit the Frederick Chapter DAR on Facebook. ■



# 9-11 MEMORIAL STAIR CLIMBS

By Judi Whitlow



Working for the Foundation has allowed me the opportunity to participate in a number of exceptional events. One that I am especially proud to have been a part of is the 9-11 Stair Climb. My coworkers and I assisted with registration for the Stair Climb held at the Washington (DC) Hilton.

The Washington Hilton is 10 floors high. Each climber had to climb 11 times to reach the goal of 110 floors, the same number of floors in the WTC. Many of the firefighters who climbed did so in their turnout gear. Climbers from fire departments in Maryland, Virginia, DC, and Pennsylvania were present, including an entire class of recruits from Prince George's County, Maryland.

We watched the climbers as they left the room to ascend the stairwell and then returned a few moments later. Climbers rang a fire bell and called out the name of the firefighter they climbed for when they returned. After observing for a while, my coworkers, Pat and Eileen, and I decided to go for it, too.

I climbed for Firefighter Richard B. Van Hine, Squad 41, and Firefighter Lawrence Virgilio, Squad 18. I think everyone felt compelled to finish the climb and bring "their" firefighters back with them. Climbing 10 floors is a little harder than it sounds. I was amazed at the recruit class that actually ran past us singing and cheering all the way. They didn't stop until they had completed the climb 11 times. Unfortunately, I did not make it 11 times. But I do have the photos of Firefighter Van Hine and Firefighter Virgilio on my desk, where they are remembered every day.

If a Stair Climb is held near you, I urge you to register. It's a moving experience that offers a positive connection to an event that changed the world, while supporting the Foundation that supports the survivors.

For more information about the Stair Climbs, visit: <http://9-11stairclimb.com>. ■

## MEET THE STAFF

JUDI WHITLOW



Judi Whitlow joined the Foundation staff in 2004 and currently



serves as Financial Specialist in the business office. Like most Foundation employees, Judi wears more than one hat. She also develops products for the Foundation gift shop, serves as liaison for the Memorial Park and manages the Walk of Honor® brick program. She was instrumental during the renovation of the Memorial Chapel and has participated at many trade shows and fundraising events. Judi says she is grateful to have been involved in so many worthy projects and feels blessed that she is able to serve the fire service and the wonderful people she has met through the Foundation. ■

## SARBANES SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

- The Scholarship Committee selected 78 scholarship recipients for the 2011-12 academic year, including children, stepchildren, and spouses
- The Foundation, with a very generous donation from the Motorola Foundation, awarded \$205,000 total in scholarship awards for the 2011-12 academic year
- Scholarship recipients range in age from 18 to 37 and hail from 26 states
- Since 1997, the Foundation has awarded over \$1,771,500 total in scholarships

For more information about the NFFF Sarbanes Scholarship Program and other sources of educational assistance, visit the Benefits section at [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org).



*Thank you so much for this scholarship! In light of the burden and stress of college preparation, this is a great relief. I am very thankful to the Foundation for considering my application and choosing me as a recipient of this award. Please extend my deep gratitude to all involved.*

*One of our biggest blessings in life following my father's death has been our association with the Foundation. Everyone has been a tremendous support, and I am thankful for the place this organization holds in my heart. I look at the Sarbanes scholarship as not just financial aid, but a meaningful extension of the friendship shared with the NFFF.*

*Thank you!*  
Kevin Moore  
Son of Tom Moore (1999-CA)



# EVERYONE GOES HOME<sup>®</sup>



In 1992, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation was created to help support the surviving family and departments of firefighters who die in the line of duty. In 2004, we expanded our mission to include prevention of firefighter line-of-duty deaths. The 16 Life Safety Initiatives were developed to address preventable causes of line-of-duty deaths. The *Everyone Goes Home*<sup>®</sup> (EGH) program was launched with grant funding from Fire Act, and with the help of Fireman's Fund Insurance.



## LIFE SAFETY INITIATIVE NO. 2

**Enhance the personal and organizational accountability for health and safety throughout the fire service.**

*By Victor Stagnaro, NFFF Director of Fire Service Programs*

Those of us who have spent a significant amount of time in the fire service, and who have been working to push the message of safety, are well aware that heart attacks claim more firefighters every year than any other cause of death. Amazingly, though we know the most common cause of firefighter fatalities within our industry, and it makes sense to those outside the industry, these events continue to catch firefighters by surprise.

The health and safety of our fire service personnel rests on the shoulders of two integral parts of the fire service: each individual firefighter and the organization from which they obtain their authority to operate. Two courses have been developed since the inception of the *Everyone Goes Home*<sup>®</sup> program that incorporate elements of this initiative. The *Courage to Be Safe* course and the more recent *Leadership, Accountability, Culture and Knowledge (LACK)* course cover issues related to personal responsibility and the responsibility that lies squarely on the organization.

Individuals are challenged to take a close look in the mirror and ask themselves, "If I were trapped in a building and in need of rescue, would I be up to the task of going in and making the rescue? Am I the person I would want to come in and save the lives of the people I love?" Likewise, is the organization taking steps to ensure that the people who operate within the system have the tools they need to safely accomplish the tasks, and do they provide the training to ensure that everyone knows how to operate safely within the system? Are physical fitness requirements met by each firefighter, and does the department require medical physicals as part of an

annual check-up? Furthermore, do firefighters and/or the organizations accept an attitude of complacency, or do they demand adherence to the rules and regulations that are designed to keep firefighters safe?

The rookie firefighter and the fire chief at the top of the organization have responsibilities related to

this initiative, along with everyone in between. Holding others accountable can take as much courage or even more courage than running into a hazardous environment to mitigate an emergency. It truly takes leadership to ensure safe practices.

In the upcoming year, we will be working on a project on cardiac health with the Johns Hopkins Ciccarone Preventive Cardiology Center. This project will involve up to 50 firefighters in the Maryland area. They will go through a rigorous screening

process to determine if there are ways to detect pre-disposed conditions that could result in a cardiac event. Through the data gathered in this study, Johns Hopkins hopes to develop a better and more cost effective way to screen firefighters who may otherwise have gone undiagnosed with a cardiac condition that could lead to a heart attack.

Recently the National Fire Protection Association published its annual Report on Firefighter Fatalities in the U.S. The report shows the lowest numbers of on-duty deaths in 34 years, but numbers of deaths from cardiac arrest remain steady. Clearly, the efforts of the NFFF, along with many other organizations, continues to make a difference, but our job is far from done. ■



# Remembering FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS



## Keith Roma (2001-NY) Sent by his father, Arnie Roma

**O**n September 11, 2001, I had just completed a shift as a nurse in the emergency room at Staten Island Hospital. I was awakened by my son, Keith, who was assigned to Fire Patrol 2 and was responding to the World Trade Center. Knowing they were arriving first due, my last words to him were, "Be careful. I will meet you there." I never got the chance to meet Keith there, but I am so grateful I spoke with him.

Upon my arrival, I was assigned, along with another police officer, to assist injured emergency personnel in the South Tower. Keith was evacuating people in the North Tower. I was one of a handful of emergency workers to survive the collapse and was removed to a New Jersey hospital, all the time thinking that Keith and his company saw what happened and were out of the Tower. Keith was not that fortunate, though he was credited with saving dozens of people from the North Tower. Some survivors have contacted me. They remember his heroic actions.

Keith's favorite holiday was Christmas. How ironic, on Christmas Eve at the pile, we found seven civilians. This was Keith's last group he was leading to safety. Then Keith came home.

On Christmas Day 2001, my wife and I spent Christmas with Keith one last time. I got to "meet him" one last time, help wrap him up in our flag, and escort him to the holding area at the Medical Examiner's Office. It was an honor I will never live up to.

Keith sent us a message that Christmas Day; on his favorite holiday, he was home.

We started a 501(c)3 non-profit in Keith's name. In 2009, the Fire Patrol was disbanded. I have reincorporated it, New York Fire Patrol, and hope to resume operations this winter, all in the honor of Keith



and the other members who would have been forgotten. In the Fire Patrol's 200-year history, 32 members have made the supreme sacrifice. The Patrol was the oldest paid fire organization in the U.S.

Keith Roma was a 2nd generation member of the New York Fire Patrol. He is one of several non-FDNY firefighters who died on September 11th, 2001, and are honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

## Jerry Wayne Ramey (1999-AR) Sent by his mother, Marcia Ramey



Jerry Wayne Ramey lost his life in the line of duty in 1999 while volunteering as a firefighter for the West Fork (AR) Fire Department.

We are thrilled that Greenland Schools, where Jerry attended, has just placed a memorial for the fallen heroes, students lost in the line of duty. Jerry was the only firefighter listed, but since so few will ever make it to Maryland to see the beautiful one there, we are honored that they added Jerry's name to this memorial. Though not yet landscaped, it looks beautiful to us.

The memorial sits on the Jonathan Ramey Memorial Field, named in honor of Jerry's little brother, who passed away while working a football game. At the time of Jonathan's death, Jerry Wayne changed his football jersey to his brother's number as a way to show his love and respect. He wondered if anyone understood why. Now he has his own place in Greenland and knows he is honored!



# Remembering FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS



**Paul Mitchell (2001-NY)**  
Sent by his sister, Marie Mitchell

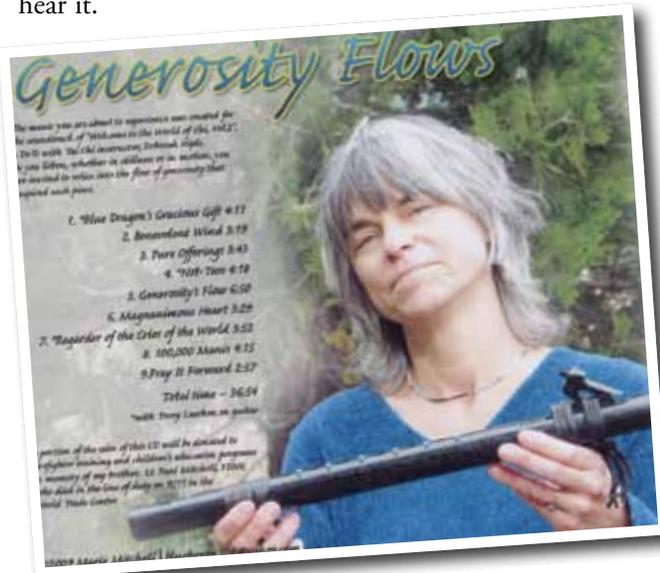


friend, who was a tai chi instructor at our local college, requested that I play my Native American flute music as the soundtrack

for her tai chi instructional DVD. (She has since succumbed to breast cancer on 12/24/10. It was a great honor to be with her as she passed on from this world). She insisted on reciprocating by making some CDs of the music.

I thought it would be a good opportunity to raise some money and contribute to good causes in honor of my brother, Lt. Paul Mitchell, FDNY, who died at the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001. Hence the title for the CD: "Generosity Flows."

So far, money has gone to a Native American education center, a school for refugees high in the Himalayas, a music program for kids in a rural elementary school, and to a fund for firefighter families in Washington, DC (Heroes, Inc. was set up in honor of a fallen firefighter. I walked by the firehouse and read the plaque that honored the firefighter and wrote them a check.) Donations have been small. The CD probably won't win a Grammy and has kind of a niche market (It ain't country.), but folks seem to enjoy it when they hear it.



**Mark Davis (2009-NY)**  
Sent by his mother, Marsha Dickinson



My son, Mark Davis, of Cape Vincent Volunteer Fire Department was treating a patient who became agitated and shot him. I am working

with New York state Senator Patty Ritchie to put together legislation that would impose the maximum criminal penalty for anyone who kills a firefighter or emergency worker.

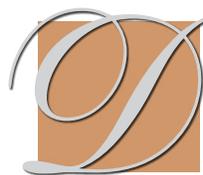
My goal is to get this bill passed in NY, and I would LOVE to see it passed nationwide. Hopefully, we can get other fire departments in other states to promote this as well. I believe this bill sends a strong message to the community that depends on their services. We will use our laws to protect not only the police community/families, but our firefighters and EMS, too. I think it needs to be done yesterday.



Thank you for getting the word out. The more people that know and agree, the quicker we can protect our families and friends. I'd really like to see that no one else has to go through what I have. Losing my son was the hardest thing I've ever had to face. There is strength in family and friends. Together, we can make a difference.

For more information, go to [www.nysenate.gov/senator/patty-ritchie](http://www.nysenate.gov/senator/patty-ritchie), or contact Marsha at [treasure172@yahoo.com](mailto:treasure172@yahoo.com).

**Brian Neville (2008-MD)**



Dennis and Jane Neville, parents of Brian Neville, attended the

Maryland Fire/Rescue Memorial in Annapolis in June. Jane was a speaker during the service, and Dennis was interviewed by Fox 45 news. Though public speaking is a new venture for the Nevilles, they handled it like pros and did the fire service survivor community proud! ■



# DID YOU KNOW...



ou may be able to donate to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation through the

Combined Federal Campaign by payroll deduction where you work. Our CFC number is: 10292. We greatly appreciate your support!

## SAVE THE DATE 2011!

**September 11, 2011**

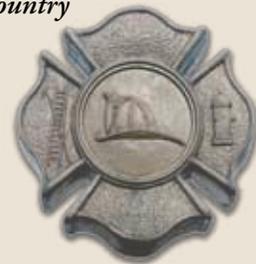
*9-11 Stair Climbs at various locations across the country*  
[www.9-11stairclimb.com](http://www.9-11stairclimb.com)

**October 2, 2011**

*NASCAR Event to Benefit NFFF*  
Dover International Speedway — Dover, DE

**October 14-16, 2011**

*30th Annual National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend*  
Emmitsburg, MD  
[weekend.firehero.org](http://weekend.firehero.org)



For additional information on upcoming events, visit [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org).

This project was supported by Grant #2009-PS-DX-K016, awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author(s) and do not represent the official position or policies of the United States Department of Justice.

HELP US stay in touch.  
Please remember to notify us at [firehero@firehero.org](mailto:firehero@firehero.org) when you have a change of mailing or e-mail address!

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation  
Post Office Drawer 498  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727  
(301) 447-1365 • (301) 447-1645 Fax  
[www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org)  
e-mail: [firehero@firehero.org](mailto:firehero@firehero.org)

