

# FACING TOMORROW TOGETHER

*National Fallen Firefighters Foundation*  
A Newsletter for Fire Service Survivors



By Chief Ronald J. Siarnicki,  
*Executive Director of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation*

**H**al Bruno was a legendary journalist who headed up political coverage for ABC and Newsweek Magazine, hosted the vice-presidential debate of 1992 and also had a lifelong passion for firefighting. Only Hal could sit at a table discussing who might be the next president with Peter Jennings, David Brinkley or Ted Koppel but be just as happy sitting in a firehouse kitchen learning who might be the next fire chief while hearing details of a particularly stubborn blaze during the previous shift.

But Hal Bruno's mark on the fire service goes beyond politics. It revolves around a special relationship Hal had with the survivors of fallen firefighters.

As a charter member of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's Board of Directors, its chairman from

1999 to 2008 and chairman emeritus until his death on November 8, 2011, at age 83, Hal Bruno left a legacy that is unmatched in caring for the families, honoring the fallen and preventing firefighter deaths and injuries.

Chief Dennis Compton said that Hal had some simple but important advice for him when taking over as chairman: Care for the families of our fallen heroes as you care for your own.

There was no doubt that Hal Bruno lived those words in everything he did at the Foundation. Hal was always there when a survivor needed an embrace, their hand held or just someone who would listen.

And he did listen. When Hal learned that federal benefits under the Hometown Heroes Survivors Benefit Act were stalled, he worked tirelessly with the Congressional Fire Services Institute and others to get what had been promised

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# REMEMBERING HAL BRUNO *continued from page 1*



to the families of firefighters who died in the line of duty from heart attack or stroke. It came at a time when Hal's own health was failing and he was considering stepping down as chairman.

Jo Ann Tilton of Katy, Texas, one of those whose benefits were stalled, recalls Hal pledging that he would not retire until he saw the Hometown Heroes claims being processed properly. She wrote upon hearing of Hal's passing, "He kept his word and did just that. Hal Bruno was a special, special man. He will be missed."

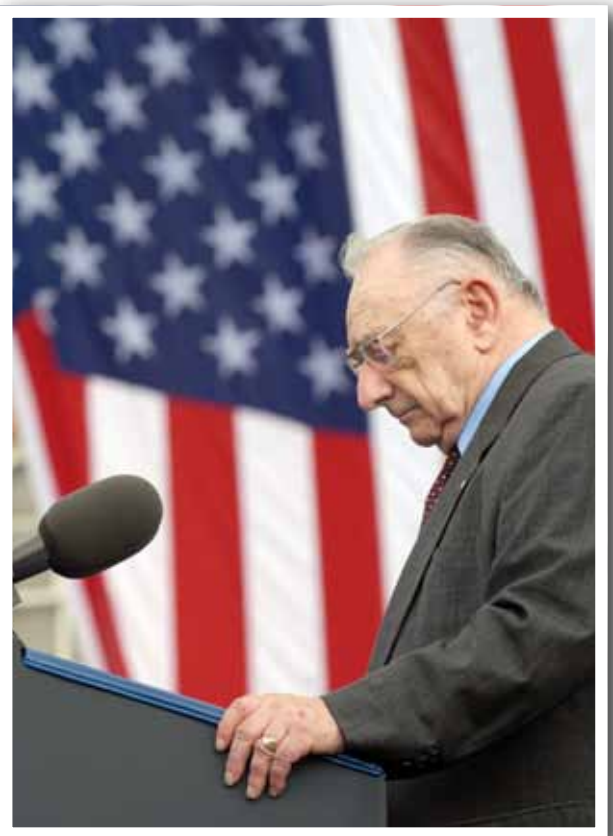
Sharon Purdy, of Spencerville, Ohio, who lost her firefighter husband, Lee, in January of 2000, said, "Hal was the strength that was needed by all of us."

When Hal brought me aboard in 2001 as executive director of the Foundation he set a guiding principle that we still follow to this day. It is never about us. It is always about the survivors.

Just a few months later we were suddenly dealing with

the survivors of 343 FDNY firefighters and 4 other responders who died that day. It was an enormous challenge for a small organization with limited resources. But Hal Bruno never said no to what was needed to help FDNY and the families of those heroes. In fact, the work we were able to do under Hal's leadership after September 11 helped create today's National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the services that are now available to the survivors.

Al and Maureen Santora, of New York City, whose son, Firefighter Christopher A. Santora, died on September 11, wrote, "His energy and vision and his perseverance created an organization that continues



to grow and has helped thousands of family members understand what the firefighter family is all about. His legacy will live on in all of us."

A special tribute page has been set up through the Foundation's web site at [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org). Please take a few moments to read about Hal's remarkable life and to let his family know how Hal's life touched yours. ■

◀ Hal with his wife Meg (left)



# 2012 FIRE SERVICE SURVIVORS CONFERENCE



Want to beat the winter blues this year? Come join us for the 7th annual Survivors Conference, which will be held February 12-17, 2012, in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

The conference is open to all adult survivors of firefighters who have died in the line of duty and been honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Parents, spouses, siblings, adult children, and other family members have attended previous conferences. The conference itself is provided free of charge. With the help of generous sponsors, the Foundation is also able to provide lodging and a stipend to help with other costs.

The Survivors Conference offers survivors a variety of workshops focusing on wellness, healing, and practical concerns. Previous workshop topics have included children's grief, art therapy, yoga, nutrition, active listening, home maintenance, speech coaching, dating, forgiveness, and self-defense. You choose the topics that suit you best.

During the conference, participants have time to get to know one another and form friendships that can help sustain them long after the conference ends. Join others for evening activities, venture out to nearby shopping



and restaurants, and enjoy a day-long excursion and tour of the local area.

Please contact Linda Hurley for more information at [lhurley@firehero.org](mailto:lhurley@firehero.org) or (301) 447-7693. We hope to see you there!

Here's what a few survivors who attended previous conferences had to say:

*We enjoyed our first conference very much. We have met so many caring, helpful people who gave us wonderful support. We are blessed to call you friends. (mother, Maryland)*

*It was great to reconnect with old friends and make connections with new friends. I hope that I can help someone in the ways that I am helped. I definitely feel recharged. (wife, Arkansas)*

*Thank you to everyone that was part of this conference. It was a great experience, and I learned a lot of good things to help keep me grounded and stress free when things get a little heavy at times. (sister, Texas)*



## Happy Holidays!

We understand that the holiday season is often bittersweet when someone you love dearly has died. Remember to take good care of yourselves during this time of year, to participate in the festivities as much or as little as you want, and to support one another during the holidays.

You and your loved ones are always in our hearts. From all of us at the Foundation, we wish you a safe and peaceful holiday season and good things to come in the New Year. ■



# MEMORIAL WEEKEND



Each year, hundreds of people travel from across the United States and work together to make the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend happen. It is a time when people rise to the occasion and put aside differences and personal needs to create a healing event for the families of firefighters being honored at the National Memorial.

Our heartfelt thanks to the returning survivors, firefighters, volunteers, corporate sponsors, NETC staff, and others who worked together to make the 2011 Memorial Weekend memorable and meaningful for the survivors of our honored firefighters.

To the families and friends of the firefighters honored this year, we continue to hold you and your beloved firefighters in our hearts and prayers. ■



*Clowns*



*Luminary*



*Sharing*

“ Thank you for all of your help during and leading up to the Memorial Weekend. We didn't know what to expect and were so appreciative of the compassion and support we received during the whole weekend. Your help guiding us through the process was wonderful. We are really glad we came. ”



*Remembrance*



*Family*



# OCTOBER 15-16, 2011

*Memories*



*Together*



*Keepsakes*



“ The love, support, care, and compassion shown by everyone truly touched our hearts. Thank you for the beautiful gifts and the very special memories you helped us create, along with new friendships and extended support system. If you ever wonder if all the time, planning, coordinating, etc. are worth it, please know that, to me and my family, you made a difference and helped a difficult time be a little easier. ”

*Sea of Blue*



*Friends*



*Candlelight*



“ The weekend was more than what I was even expecting. My escort went way beyond the call of duty helping me. I spoke with many other families that had lost a loved one as well. It was very heart-filling. ”

*Honor*



*Support*



*Doves*



# MEMORIAL WEEKEND

## BELLS ACROSS AMERICA FOR FALLEN FIRE HEROES

*“When a firefighter dies in the line of duty, the sadness resonates through an entire community. Through Bells Across America for Fallen Firefighters, everyone across the country has the opportunity to pay tribute to the lives of these brave men and women.”*

— Chief Ronald J. Siarnicki, *NFFF Executive Director*



For the first time in the 30-year history of the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend, the bells of the Memorial Chapel

rang on Sunday, October 16, to honor the fallen. As part of this tribute, fire departments, places of worship and other community organizations across the country joined the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation for Bells Across America for Fallen Firefighters, the first nationwide remembrance for firefighters who died in the line of duty.

The idea was suggested by Colonel Bob Ditch, USAF, Retired, and a fifth generation firefighter. The Foundation launched this grass-roots effort in July and encouraged fire department representatives to work with their local clergy to develop an appropriate remembrance. The website [www.bellsacrossamerica.com](http://www.bellsacrossamerica.com) was created to explain the program and provide an invitation for departments to use.

The response was tremendous. From small, rural towns to major metropolitan areas, hundreds of fire departments participated. Many contacted multiple places of worship to ring their bells,



including 36 churches and other places of worship in Howard County, Maryland, 7 churches in the town of Mansfield, Louisiana, and 13 churches in the community of Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania. In the city of Woodstock, Illinois, the Opera House rang their bells while fire department members gathered outside. Other congregations shared a reading or prayer, sang a special selection of songs or observed a moment of silence during their Sunday service.

As the Memorial Service began in Emmitsburg, a video was shown of church bells ringing around the country. Later in the service, after all the fallen were honored, another video was shared of the 332nd Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron firefighters, who created their own Bells Across

America tribute. Stationed at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia, they used a fire extinguisher as their bell and a spanner wrench as a clapper to honor those firefighters who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Foundation plans to continue Bells Across America for Fallen Firefighters each year. From the outpouring of support this first year, it is expected to continue to grow as a fitting tribute from a grateful nation. ■



*Mark Your Calendars!*  
**MEMORIAL WEEKEND 2012**  
**OCTOBER 5TH-7TH**



# REMEMBERING FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS

## PATRICK HENRY (2006-CA)

*Sent by his wife, Michelle Henry*

My husband, Captain Patrick Henry, worked with inmate crews, and one of their activities was making picnic tables out of old growth redwood to sell at silent auctions benefiting the Make-A-Wish Foundation. It is such a huge honor to see that a table was made for him and put in a beautiful spot in MacKerricher State Park, overlooking the Pacific Ocean, just a few blocks from our house. It was made by the inmates at Parlin Fork where Pat worked. We will have a small dedication picnic at this table. Thank you to Davina Sentak, chaplain, and to CAL Fire, for remembering Pat.



## SIDNEY A. HALL (2007-IN)

*Sent by his wife, Bonnie Hall*

Kenny Wallace raced his 09 car on October 14 in the Nationwide NASCAR Race. His car for this race was sponsored by his fans. We could ask for our names or the name of a loved one to be on the car. There are two sections on the car with the names of those In Memory. On one, I had placed "Fallen Firefighter Sid Hall." I wanted to do it to remember Sid in a special way and as a prelude leading up to Sid's memorial service on the 5th anniversary of his death in January. What is also interesting is that this race was the same weekend as the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend. I wonder if God had something to do with that planning! ■



## NEW BEGINNINGS



As Foundation staff, we sometimes think we have seen every situation imaginable. However, during the 2011

Memorial Weekend, we narrowly avoided a close encounter with childbirth.

The family of William "Bill" Akin traveled from New York to honor him as his name was added to the National Memorial. Bill's daughter, Ashley Butta, was 8 1/2 months pregnant with her first child and scheduled to deliver



as soon as she returned home from the Memorial Weekend.

We are happy to report that the little guy stayed put until after the Memorial Weekend and arrived safely soon after. His grandmother, Rita Akin, writes: *Our little bundle of joy, Nicholas Philip Butta Jr. was born October 18, 2011 at 10:31 am at 6lbs. 15 oz. and 19.25 in length. Mom, Dad, and baby are all doing wonderful, and I am so glad she waited until we returned to New York to have him.*

Welcome to the world, little Nicholas! And congratulations to new parents, Michael and Ashley (Akin) Butta, and to new grandmother, Rita Akin. ■



# EVERYONE GOES HOME®



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*® (EGH) program was launched with grant funding from Fire Act, and with the help of Fireman's Fund Insurance.



## LIFE SAFETY INITIATIVE NO. 3

**Focus greater attention on the integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including strategic, tactical, and planning responsibilities.**

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

*The striking aspect of the Nation's fire problem is the indifference with which Americans confront the subject. Destructive fire takes a huge toll in lives, injuries, and property losses, yet there is no need to accept those losses with resignation. There are many measures--often very simple precautions--that can be taken to reduce those losses significantly.*

These words were printed in the opening paragraph of the 1973, final report of the National Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, also known as America Burning. Since then, the number of destructive fires has been reduced; and the number of firefighter fatalities has seen a steady decline. However, there are still simple precautions that can be taken to reduce firefighter deaths and injuries.

Integration of risk management with incident command has had many positive effects within the fire service. Probably every fire service organization in the country continues to promote the integration through the use of an incident management system and adding tools like the Rules of Engagement developed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs, Safety and Survival Section. Essentially, every firefighter and fire officer is required to have a

situational awareness and make a decision as to whether the risk to their life or the lives of their crew is worth the potential outcome.

As noted in the 1973 report, there are some who remain indifferent to the dangers faced by firefighting. There are many who believe, "It simply will not happen to me." Furthermore, there are many firefighters who believe that operating safely will actually detract from the effectiveness of an emergency operation, that it will actually slow them down or prevent them from being

operationally successful. This is in spite of the overwhelming proof that every industry that has focused greater attention to the safety of their personnel actually becomes more efficient.

Integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including

strategic, tactical, and planning responsibilities, is so much more than risking a little to save a little and risking a lot to save a lot. It's also about being proficient enough before, during and after an incident, continuously sizing up an operation and doing what is best for the community--saving citizens' lives, protecting firefighters from injury and death and protecting property. ■





# WE ARE THANKFUL FOR OUR GENEROUS DONORS!

## WATKINS MANUFACTURING

**W**atkins Manufacturing has earned the reputation as the global leader in the hot tub industry. Last month, the company proudly announced the significant milestone of producing its one millionth spa.

The company pledged to make a donation to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and held an online auction among Hot Spring Spas retailers worldwide for the right to own the one millionth tub. The company also pledged to match 100% of the dealer's winning bid, doubling the charitable donation.

Bruno Woodtli owner of Hewoo AG, a Hot Spring Spas dealership in Switzerland, won the One Millionth Spa with a final bid of \$17,200. As planned, Watkins Manufacturing is matching the winning bid, providing a total donation amount \$34,400 to support the families of fallen firefighters across the United States.

"This generous gift from Watkins Manufacturing will help support the Foundation's mission to provide services and assistance to the families of firefighters who died in the line of duty," said Ronald J. Siarnicki, executive director of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

Wanda Gilbert, mother of fallen firefighter Frank Gilbert, Jr. (1997-IN), represented the Foundation at the check presentation. Wanda said, "How I wish you could have been in Vista, California, yesterday. What a class act this beautiful company was to me, my daughter, and son-in-law. What an extraordinary honor this is for our fallen heroes!"



## EXCHANGE CLUB OF HANOVER, PENNSYLVANIA

**E**he Hanover Exchange Club hosted a 2011 Healing Field® 9/11 flag memorial with a beautiful display of flags in honor of those who died in the World Trade Center.

The 3,000 U.S. flags stood 8' tall in perfect rows. The display was a patriotic tribute to the strength and unity of Americans and commemorated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of all those who died in the attacks of September 11,

2001. Donations for the flag display benefited the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, The Wounded Warrior Project, and local fire, police, and veterans groups.

Doris Neilson, wife of fallen firefighter Pete Neilson (2007-MI), accepted a \$10,000 check on behalf of the NFFF from the Exchange Club of Hanover, Pennsylvania.



## BENEFIT CONCERT



**T**he Rockstar Energy Drink UPROAR Festival and tour headliners Avenged Sevenfold teamed with The Rock 106.9 WCCC in Hartford, Connecticut,

to raise \$11,000 in recognition of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11. Checks for \$5,500 were presented to both the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund on stage at the September 11 UPROAR show at the Comcast Theatre in Hartford. Thanks to Tim Pelton, who serves as deputy honor guard commander for the Memorial Weekend, for representing the NFFF at the check presentation.

## NASCAR



**T**he Foundation's relationship with NASCAR continues to grow. Two hospitality events at NASCAR races provided survivors an opportunity to attend some great races and enjoy the camaraderie of the fire service and race fans.



## NASHVILLE, TN

In July, NASCAR and the NFFF turned South. We headed to the Nashville Superspeedway for the Nationwide Series race. Survivors, firefighters, and staff were greeted with some famous southern hospitality. The day included food, door prizes and-- unique to this track--an all access pass for everyone to go visit pit row, meet their favorite drivers, and have pictures taken with their cars. For the families, corporate partners, and fans who continue to support our racing events, it was another memorable day, and funds raised for the Foundation were a bonus!

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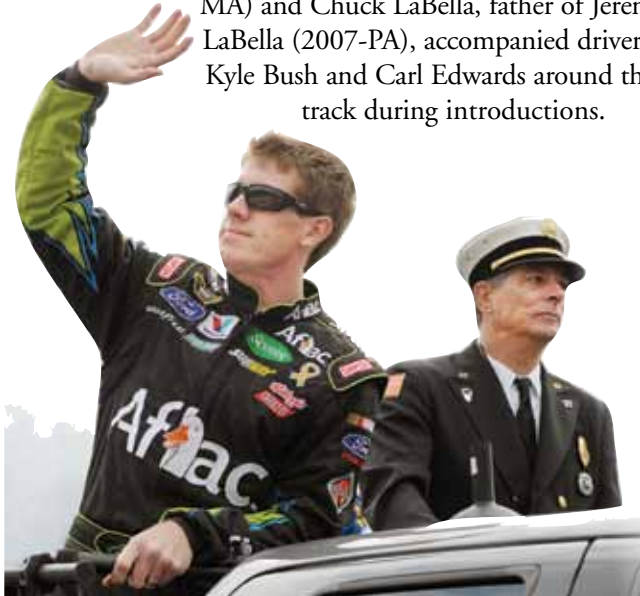


# WE ARE THANKFUL FOR OUR GENEROUS DONORS!

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## DOVER, DE

The NFFF hosted a fire service hospitality event for the fourth consecutive year at the Dover NASCAR Race. Survivors were joined by Kurt Busch, and the event was enhanced this year with the presence of a new corporate partner, Stanley Black and Decker. The hospitality event drew over 1,200 people into the NFFF tent. With the corporate sponsorships, more than \$84,000 was raised from the one-day event. Roger Nadeau, brother of Gerry Nadeau (2002-MA) and Chuck LaBella, father of Jeremy LaBella (2007-PA), accompanied drivers Kyle Bush and Carl Edwards around the track during introductions.



Carl Edwards and Chuck LaBella

## CORPORATE SPONSORS



In August, the Foundation hosted a press conference at the Atlanta Fire Department Fire Station # 11 to announce the award of a four-year commitment by the Motorola Solutions Foundation to support our scholarship program and the Everyone Goes Home® program. Motorola Solutions has pledged \$250,000 per year for the next four years to support the program. Special thanks to the entire Motorola Solutions Community for making the financial support a reality. NFFF Board Member Mark Moon deserves a special note of thanks for his efforts.

Through the efforts of Board Member Rod Matthews, the Foundation received a donation of \$100,000 to support the Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend from State Farm Insurance Company. This annual support provided by State Farm helps to ensure that families traveling for the Memorial Weekend have their transportation costs paid. We are appreciative of the support we received from State Farm and all of our other corporate partners.

The Tyco Foundation again supported the National Memorial Weekend with a donation of \$75,000. Special thanks to Mike Ryan, CEO of Scott Breathing Apparatus, for helping to make this donation a reality. Mike is an active member of our Corporate Advisory Committee and a major supporter of the NFFF. ■

## MEET THE STAFF

Jim Markel, *Business Manager*



After spending 25 years in higher education administration, Jim Markel joined the Foundation staff in January 2011 as Business

Manager. Jim's diverse portfolio of duties range from human resource concerns to facility issues to system challenges. According to Jim, "The primary focus of the Foundation is delivering both ongoing and growing services to both our survivor families and our firefighting community. Our ability to identify needs and deliver timely services will continue to define our opportunity to serve our communities."

In cultivating new business and technology opportunities, Jim believes the future of the Foundation continues to be both bright and focused. By retaining sensitivity to the needs of our communities and dedicating our staff to the sharpening of skills, Jim believes our ability to serve our constituents will be greatly enhanced.



In his spare time, Jim is pursuing his ministerial credentials, maintaining multiple blogs and writing. Jim lives in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, with his wife, Judi, a horse (Lovebug), and a rabbit (Sara). ■



# DOES YOUR STATE HAVE A FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL?



Most states have memorials dedicated to firefighters and other public safety officers who die in the line of duty. A number of states have memorials currently under development. Some states hold annual memorial services to remember fallen firefighters and invite families to attend. Other states have fallen firefighter associations or foundations that assist survivors.

Want to find out what is available in your state? The Foundation maintains a list of links to state memorials, which can be accessed through the Fallen Heroes section at [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org). Please take a moment to review what we have listed for your state and let us know if there are any updates! If your state does not have a fallen firefighter memorial and you are interested in beginning efforts to establish one, we can put you in touch with people who have been involved in efforts to develop memorials in other states. ■

## FINANCIAL HELP FOR COLLEGE



Are you the child, stepchild, spouse, or life partner of a firefighter who was honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial?

Are you graduating from high school this spring and planning to attend a college or trade school? Are you a spouse re-entering the job market or preparing to change careers?

If so, you may qualify for the Foundation's Sarbanes Scholarship Program. The deadline to apply for a

scholarship for the 2012-2013 academic year is April 1, 2012. Please visit [www.firehero.org/resources/families/scholarships](http://www.firehero.org/resources/families/scholarships) to learn more about this program, as well as other state and national scholarship programs for survivors of firefighters who died in the line of duty.

Spouses and children who received Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) may also be eligible for Public Safety Officers' Educational Assistance. Please visit [www.psob.gov](http://www.psob.gov) for specific criteria and additional information. ■

## FALLEN HEROES TRIBUTE PAGES AT [WWW.FIREHERO.ORG](http://WWW.FIREHERO.ORG)



As your loved one or a member of your department honored at the National Memorial in Emmitsburg prior to 2006? If so, you may not know that you can post a written profile and picture of your firefighter on the Foundation's website at [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org). It is another way to help keep their stories alive and to tell people about the lives of the heroes honored at the National Memorial. We would love

to be able to include your firefighter's story on the online Roll of Honor.

To check to see if a profile is posted, go to the Fallen Heroes section of the website and search the Roll of Honor by your firefighter's name. If there is no profile posted, you can send a written tribute and photograph to [webteam@firehero.org](mailto:webteam@firehero.org), and we will post it for you. If you don't have access to the Internet, you can send a typed or neatly handwritten tribute and a photo by mail. ■



*National Fallen Firefighters Foundation*



## SAVE THE DATE!

**February 12-17, 2012**

*Survivors Conference*  
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

**April 1, 2012**

*NFFF Scholarship Applications Due*

**June 8-10, 2012**

*NFFF Kids Camp (ages 7-17)*  
Mechanicsville, VA  
(Details coming soon!)

**October 5-7, 2012**

*31st 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).

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when you have a change of mailing or e-mail address!

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